

R 139278

Frontispiece



Noah and his three Sons.

T H E
P A T H S O F V I R T U E :

Exemplified in the L I V E S

O F

Eminent Men and Women.

Interspersed with

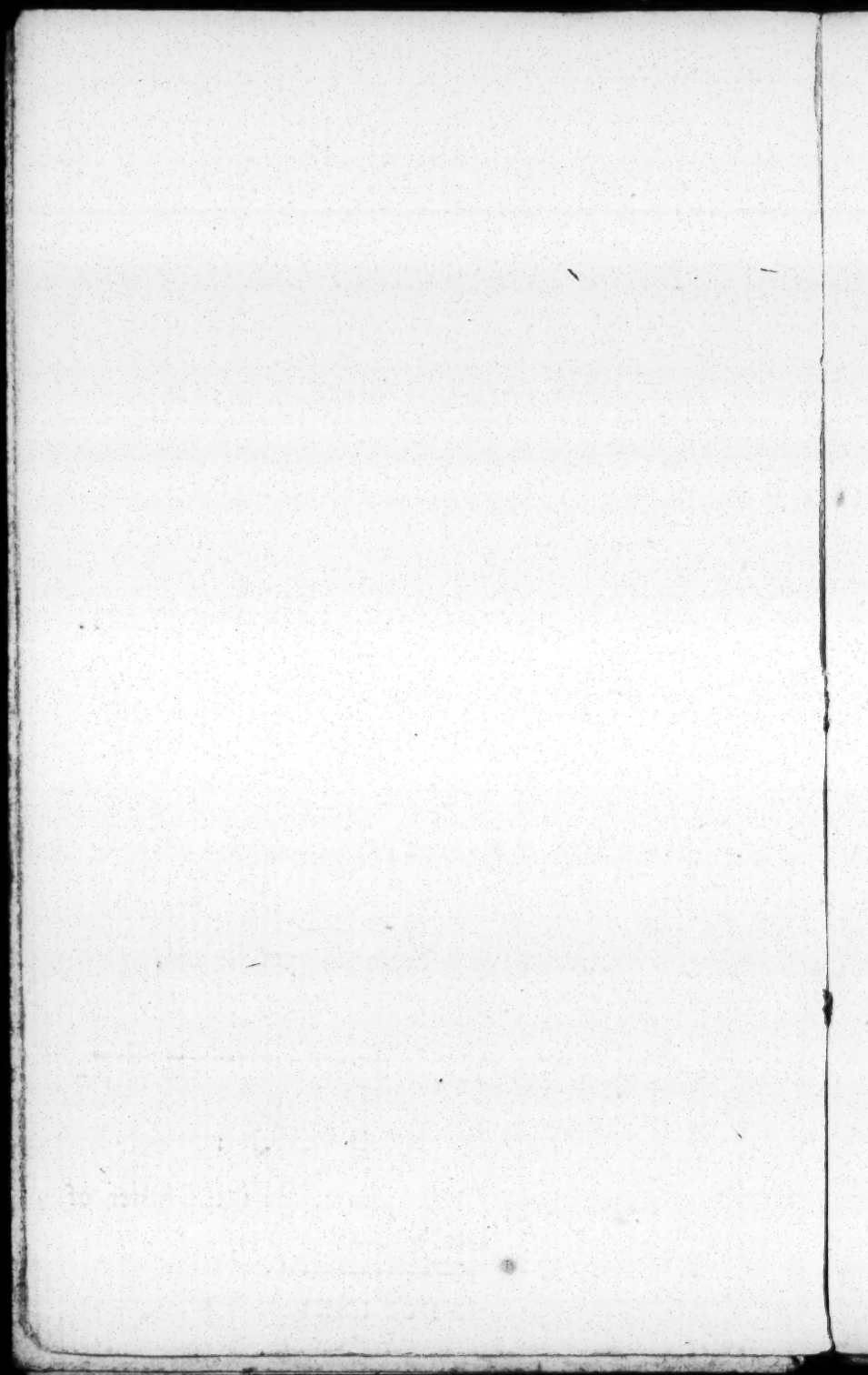
M O R A L R E F L E C T I O N S .

Embellished with Copper Plates.

L O N D O N :

Printed for F. NEWBERRY, at the Corner of
St. Paul's Church Yard.

M D C C L X X V I I .



T O

Their ROYAL HIGHNESSES

Prince Frederic William,

A N D

Princess Caroline Matilda,

This FIRST VOLUME of the LIVES of

Eminent Men and Women,

Is humbly dedicated

B Y

Their ROYAL HIGHNESSES

Most Obedient,

And Most Devoted

Humble Servant,

THE EDITOR.

THE EDITOR.



P R E F A C E.

WE should not trouble the purchasers of this little Volume with such a useless thing as a Preface generally is, was it not necessary to say a few words with regard to the reasons which induced us to publish these Lives, and to inform them of the method which we intend to pursue in perfecting a design we have of publishing some more of them.

Fables have always been thought very proper for the instruction of youth ; rendered so, by the morals which are generally couched under them ; and for the most part, explained at the end. But if fables have been found efficacious in tutoring young minds to virtue, and warning them against vice ; surely certain portions of history must be much more so, treated and enforced in the same manner.

For

For besides that the mind cannot be too early accustomed to the reception of truth, which is its natural nourishment, and therefore must ever affect it most sensibly ; there will always be an ambiguity, and an air of trifling, attendant on fable, which history must be free from. Not to mention the important knowledge of events to be gathered from the latter, which enlightens the mind, while it improves the disposition and understanding.

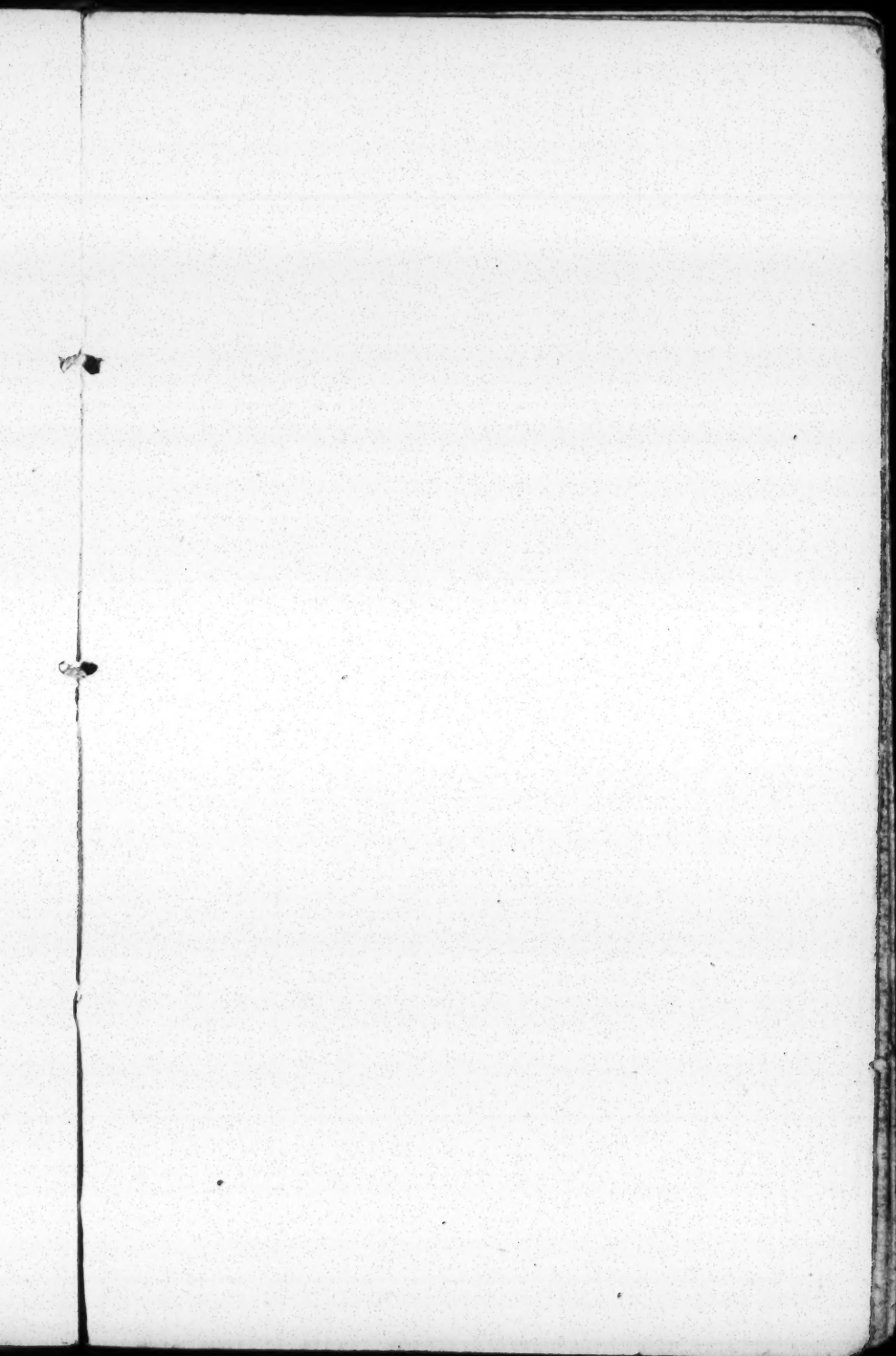
We thought the lives of eminent persons, whether men or women, properly epitomized, and conveyed in an easy familiar stile, with such moral reflections, at the same time annexed to each, as might serve to explain the several circumstances, and render them profitable examples, would be a very good improvement upon the apologue or fable.

We no sooner conceived this design, than the scripture presented itself to us ; from whence we have accordingly extracted such lives as afforded most room for observations and reflections, and at the same time cast the strongest light upon the several periods
of

P R E F A C E. iii

of sacred history. We propose pursuing the same method through the history of other nations, as well as the Jewish, Heathen, and Christian, ancient and modern. As we proceed, we shall have new matter for observation, and an opportunity of furnishing our young readers with the most wholesome remarks on the actions of men and occurrences of life ; and should we be encouraged to compleat our design, this collection of biography will, no doubt, be the most cheap, useful, and entertaining set of books that ever was put into the hands of a young person.

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ERRATA.

Page, 91, Line 2, for *Michal*, read *Micha*,

Page, 104, Line 19, for *successions*, read *concessions*.

Page, 131, Line 26, leave out the word *thee*.





EXAMPLE

BETTER THAN

PRECEPT.



THE LIFE OF

N O A H.

N the one thousand and fifty-sixth year of the creation, and about a hundred years after the death of our first parent Adam, was born Noah ; famous not only for his virtue, piety, and wisdom, but for being the chief of those in whose persons God thought proper to preserve the race of mankind, at the time of the universal deluge. It was revealed to his father, Lamech, at the birth of his son, That he and his family should be preserved from the common destruction ; and for this reason he called him Noah, which signifies comforter. But, in order to give
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our young readers a better insight to the character of Noah, it will not be amiss to look a little back, into the occasion, which brought on so terrible a revolution as the flood above mentioned.

After the death of Adam, the family of his son Seth, in order to fulfill their father's will, who commanded them never to have communication with the descendants of Cain the first murderer ; removed from the plains, where they before dwelt, to the mountains ; and for some time lived in the fear of God: but, as the posterity of Cain daily increased, which occasioned them to spread, the children of Seth, notwithstanding their late removal, soon became again their neighbours. and as evil company naturally corrupts good manners, so the example of the wicked family (for the Cainites practised all kinds of riot and debauchery) prevailed over the good ; and, by degrees, the posterity of Seth, lost all notions of virtue and religion.

Noah indeed, who was a member of the last, endeavoured, both by his council and authority, to bring them to a reformation ; but all was to no purpose, and in one word, the whole race of mankind became shortly after so very criminal, that God's patience was in the end worn out, and he resolved to destroy them, and all creatures made for their use.

Such

Such was however the mercy of the creator, that he condescended to give Noah a previous notice of his intention, and he promised not only to spare him, but, for his sake, to protect his whole family; and to this purpose he gave him orders to build a kind of vessel, not in the form of ships now in use, but rather inclining to the fashion of a large chest, or ark; and, as soon as it was finished, to pitch it both within and without. The length of this vessel was four hundred and fifty feet, the breadth seventy-five feet, and the height forty-five feet: it consisted of three stories, and in every other respect was most admirably fitted for the use it was designed.

While Noah was building the ark, vain was it for him to tell the rest of the world, who laughed at his labour, to what purpose he was at work. But having finish'd it just seven days before the fatal sentence was to be put in execution, God gave him instructions to take in both cattle, birds, and reptiles of all kinds, in such proportion as he judged best for the future propagation of their species; and when that was settled, Noah himself, being then six hundred years old, retired with all his family, consisting of eight persons, into the ark, and there occupied the several apartments designed for them.

It was now about the middle of September, and in a few days after the whole face of nature

4 THE LIFE OF NOAH.

ture began to wear a most dismal aspect ; a heavy rain poured from the clouds ; the earth was on a sudden broke up, the waters enclosed in the centre of it rushed out, and the sea no longer keeping its bounds, overspread every place with a dreadful inundation. It was too late for the unhappy inhabitants to perceive the approach of their deserved fate, and in vain did they seek out means for their preservation. The highest hills, the tallest trees, the strongest towers, and the loftiest mountains, alas ! afford them no relief ; for, as the waters swelled, and the waves came rushing on, these and every little refuge disappeared with the wretched objects of God's displeasure.

For forty days and nights together did things remain in this deplorable situation, when as one friend is apt to remember another's distress, so God reflecting upon Noah, and the poor remains of his creation, floating in the ark, caused a drying north wind to arise. The rains and inundations instantly ceased, and the flood abated so fast, that in a short time after the ark struck on a mountain, and there rested.

This happened in the beginning of May, when summer was approaching apace : but Noah wisely considering, that although the mountains were bare, the valleys might still be overflowed, waited forty days longer before he

he attempted any farther discovery ; and then opening a window, he let go a raven, as supposing that the smell of the drowned bodies might allure him to fly at a considerable distance from the vessel. But here he was deceived ; for the raven, after several unsuccessful flights, finding nothing but water, returned to her old habitation again. Seven days after this, he let fly a dove, a bird of a strong pinion, and from the remotest places always accustomed to come home, and therefore proper to make further discoveries. But she finding nothing but water likewise, immediately returned to the ark, and was taken in. After this he waited seven days more, and then sent her forth again ; and she in the evening brought in her mouth an olive-branch, the emblem of peace, and the joyful token to Noah that the waters were much abated. After seven days more he made a third trial ; but she finding the waters gone, and the earth dry, returned no more. Noah upon this was thinking to uncover the roof, and to depart out of the ark himself ; but the pious regard to God's providence and directions in all things occasion'd him to wait five and fifty days longer, and then he received orders for him and his family to quit the vessel, and at the same time to take particular care, that every other creature should be brought forth with him.

Thus ended Noah's long and melancholy confinement, which, by a due computation from the time of his going into the ark, to that of his coming out, was exactly the space of a solar year. As soon as Noah and his family were landed, and all the creatures committed to his charge were come safe out of the ark, he selected some of every kind, both beasts and birds, but such only as were clean, and, by God's appointment, proper for sacrifice; and having built the first altar that we read of, he restored the ancient rite of divine service, and offered burnt sacrifice thereon. And this he did with so grateful a sense of God's goodness, and so reverential a fear of the divine majesty, as procured him a gracious acceptance; and in testimony of that acceptance, several grants and promises.

God's promises were, that, tho' mankind were naturally wicked, and apt to go astray, yet, be their iniquities ever so great, he would not any more destroy the earth by a general deluge, or disturb the order of nature; and, in confirmation of this, he appointed the rainbow for a token, which, (whether it used to appear before the flood or no) was now to be a ratification of the truth of his promise, and his faithful witness in heaven. The grants which God gave Noah and his sons were, not only the same dominion, which our first parent before the fall, had over the animal creation,

ation; a full power to keep them in submission and subjection; but a privilege likewise to kill any of these creatures for food; only with this restriction, that they were not to put them to unnecessary cruelty, or to eat any part of their blood, which might be a means to introduce the shedding of human blood; and with these grants and promises he gave them encouragement (as he did our first progenitors) to be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, which was now almost left destitute of inhabitants.

But though the deluge might deprive the world of its inhabitants, it had not so totally destroyed the trees, plants, and other vegetables, but that they soon began to appear again, and, nourished by the kindly warmth of the sun, discovered their several species by the several fruits they bore. Noah, before the flood, had applied himself to husbandry, and now, upon the recovery of the earth again, betook himself to the same occupation. Among his other improvements of the ground, he had planted a vineyard, and perhaps was the first man who invented a press to squeeze the juice out of the grape, and so make wine. Natural curiosity might tempt him to taste the fruit of his own labour; but being either unacquainted with the strength of this liquor, or through age and infirmity unable to bear it, so it happened, that, drinking a little too freely,

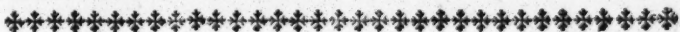
freely, he became quite intoxicated with it, and falling asleep in his tent, lay with his body uncovered, and in a very indecent posture was exposed to the eyes of his children.

Ham, who espy'd his father in this condition, instead of concealing his weakness, proclaimed it aloud, and to his other two brothers, Shem and Japhet, made him the subject of his scorn and derision. But so far were they from being pleased with his behaviour in this respect, that taking a garment, and laying it upon both their shoulders, they went backward, till coming to their father, they dropt it upon him, and so covered the nakedness their pious modesty would not suffer them to behold.

Nor is it improbable, that, to prevent the like indecency, they watched him during the remaining time of his sleep, and might possibly, upon his awaking, acquaint him with what had happened : whereupon, perceiving how unworthily his son Ham had used him, he cursed the race in the person of Canaan his grandson ; and reflecting on the respectful behaviour of his other two sons, he rewarded their pious care with each one a blessing, which in process of time were fulfilled in their posterity.

Noah lived three hundred and fifty years after the deluge, in all nine hundred and fifty ; and, if we will believe the tradition of
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the orientals, he was buried in Mesopotamia, where, not far from a religious foundation, called The Monastery of our Father, they shew us, in a castle, a large sepulchre, which, they say, belonged to him. But as for the common opinion of his dividing the world among his sons before his death, giving to Shem Asia; to Ham Africa; and to Japhet Europe; there is no manner of foundation for it either in scripture or traditions.



REFLECTION.

THE life of the patriarch Noah is full of many striking and excellent examples, which, if properly explained and attended to, cannot fail of having the most wholesome influence on the minds and manners of every one. The flood itself indeed, if we consider it as we should do, will affect us in a very particular manner; tho' I am sorry to say, that some wicked and conceited men have rather busied themselves in cavils about that terrible event, than in turning it to the use they should have made of it. These shallow creatures in particular cannot conceive how Noah could construct a building, such as the ark
was,

TO THE LIFE OF NOAH.

was, spacious enough to contain the number of animals the scripture tells us he received into it. But, without making any allowance for an almighty power, which could enable him to do any thing, this matter scarcely comes under the head of surprising. It is true, at first hearing, the multitude of creatures Noah took into the ark, seem immense; but when we know that there are not more than a hundred sorts of beasts, and scarce two hundred of birds in the whole creation, we shall smile at the doubts of these pretenders to reason. Thus he that looks upon the stars, as they are confusedly scattered up and down the heavens, may think them innumerable; yet we are assured by astronomers, from the best observations, that there are not many more than a thousand in all, of which never above five hundred can be seen from any one spot of this globe. But let us reflect on the flood in a different light: let us regard it as the just judgment of God on a wicked and degenerate race; of that God who never fails to punish iniquity with severity; and let this fearful example assure us, that as one time he thought proper to visit the sins of the whole earth, by destroying all its inhabitants, so he will not fail in a degree always to punish the crimes of individuals in a manner equally exemplary; and let this fix us in a determination to walk in the ways of virtue,

in

in which alone we can avoid meeting the terrors of danger, and falling into the pit of destruction. Noah we see by a conduct like this, not only preserved himself, but all who belonged to him, in that tremendous hour when the iniquities of man were so universal, that had not the mercy and justice of God been still greater, he might easily have overlooked the few, very few sound persons that were dispersed in such a sink of corruption. But never will he confound the innocent with the guilty; and we may rest satisfied, that, if we are good, there is no calamity, be it ever so general, from which we may not hope to be exempted. Nay, if the worthy and religious were unable, as instruments under God, to help themselves, we need not even despair of the visible interference of the Almighty to save and assist them.

We have seen Noah in a wonderful manner preserved in the ark; we have seen him, and all those under his protection, freed from that confinement, and placed again upon the earth to people it after the destruction of its former unworthy inhabitants; yet such is the inflexible justice of God in making an example of vice, and so cautious ought mankind to be in all circumstances, and at all seasons, of offending him in the smallest particular, that at this very time, when the patriarch himself was receiving distinguished marks of his
favour,

favour, and the number of his posterity were so very few, he would not let the irregularities of the one, or the crimes of the other, escape without the severest strictures.

In the life of Noah you have heard he was inconsiderate enough to drink to excess. This indeed is a vice of the most odious kind, and not only as it debases the nature of man, in reducing his understanding to a rank infinitely inferior to that of the beasts ; but as it leaves him exposed to the commission of indecencies and immoralities which beasts are incapable of. Thus Noah, when he came to himself, had the shame and mortification to find that, while he was drunk, he had been exposed in a most unseemly posture before his children : well had it been indeed if no worse consequence had followed it. But one of his sons, either through weakness or wickedness, made a mock of the situation he found his father in ; and he enraged at such undutiful treatment, cursed him and his children, while the pious youths who disapproved of the behaviour of their brother, and with the utmost reverence covered their father as he lay, was rewarded with as ample a blessing. An excellent lesson both to parents and children, that as the former should always take care to preserve such a rectitude and dignity as should never encourage their children to lose their respect for them ; so the latter, to whatever
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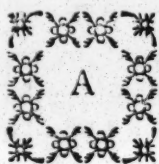
state their parents should be reduced, should always consider what both the laws of God and man require at their hands towards the authors of their being; lest they incur the censure of the one, and judgment of the other.





THE LIFE OF

A B R A H A M.



ABRAHAM, the great head and founder of the Jewish nation, was the son of Terah; born in the one thousand nine hundred and forty-eighth year of the world; and two hundred and ninety-two years after the deluge, when idolatry began again to raise up its head, and spread like a contagion over the corrupted world. But God being willing to select a particular people out of the rest of mankind, and in them to establish his church; he ordered Terah to leave the place of his then habitation, which was already tainted with most abominable pollutions, and remove with his family into a distant country, which he accordingly intended to do; but falling sick, during his progress, in the hundred and forty-fifth year of his age, he resigned his breath.

Now, after the demise of his father Terah, Abraham, by God's peculiar appointment, was ordered to retire still farther into a country,

try, to which the holy spirit should conduct him ; and at the same time the Almighty gave him the strongest assurance, that he would bless, protect, and multiply his posterity in an extraordinary manner ; and Abraham, fully persuaded of the truth of these promises, took his wife, his household, and all his effects, and pursued his journey, ignorant of his way, till, by divine guidance, he came into the land of Canaan ; where he remained some time, and erected an altar, in order to pay his devotions to God ; who, pleased with his pious behaviour, appeared to him again, and gave him fresh assurances, that the whole land, where he then dwelt, should be the portion of his posterity.

From hence he removed into the mountainous country, where he also built a place for divine worship ; and indeed he passed thro' no countries without leaving these particular instances of his piety. But as he was travelling farther to the south, a terrible famine obliged him to alter his course, and hasten into Egypt, the only place for provision, in such like exigencies. As he came to the confines of this kingdom, he began to be a little uneasy upon the account of his wife ; who, tho' she had passed the sixty-fifth year of her age, retained still beauty enough to endanger the life of a man that should pass for her husband in that country ;

and therefore, concluding it would be the safest way to conceal his marriage, he took an opportunity to acquaint her with his fears, and, after some small entreaty, prevailed with her, in all places where they came, to go under the notion of his sister.

They had not been long in Egypt before Abraham's fears were found to be true: his wife's charms wrought their usual effects, and her beauty soon became the common topic of the conversation. It reached the court, and the high commendations every one gave the king of it, raised his curiosity to see this amiable stranger. Immediately therefore was she brought to the palace, and taken into the king's apartment, as designed for one of his royal concubines; while her pretended brother was treated with uncommon civility for her sake, and never dismissed without some signal instance of the royal favour.

While matters were in this dangerous situation, the providence of God interposed in her behalf; and, to deter Pharaoh and his nobles from any dishonorable attempt upon her virtue, infected them with such plagues, as made them not insensible upon whose account it was they suffered. They discovered their mistake, and the king calling for Abraham, expostulated with him on the evil consequences that might have ensued from the
ill

ill-concerted method he had taken ; and, after some severe reprimands on the occasion, returned him his wife, giving, at the same time, orders, that they should depart the kingdom without the least molestation, either to their persons or possessions.

Abraham immediately upon this, understanding that the famine was ceased in Canaan, returned thither, and here in a short time contracted an acquaintance with three of the greatest men in his neighbourhood ; an alliance which proved extremely serviceable to him, but more particularly upon the following occasion.

Abraham's present residence was not any great distance from the plains of Sodom and Gomorrah ; and there was a king in the same district, called Cherdorlaomer, who held five petty kings in a tributary subjection to him for some years, of which number the king of Sodom was one : but about this time they shook off their yoke, and confederating against him, it provoked his pride so, that in conjunction with three other kings of his allies, he marched a powerful army against them, and fighting a battle, the five kings were put to rout ; their army cut to pieces, and their cities left a prey to the conqueror. Lot, a nephew of Abraham's, who at this time resided at Sodom, was of course involved in the calamity of the city ; was plundered

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of all he had, and himself led away among the rest of the captives. As soon as Abraham had intelligence of this misfortune, by an express Messenger, he implored the assistance of his three friends ; putting himself at the head of his own domestics, began the pursuit ; and coming up with the enemy, by dividing his forces into small parties, and attacking them on all sides, he put them into such a terror and consternation, that they immediately fled, leaving all their booty and captives behind them ; among whom he happily recovered Lot, and brought him back, with all his substance, to his former habitation.

The first person who came to congratulate Abraham upon his victory was the king of Sodom, who, in thankful acknowledgment for the benefit he had received from his valour, offered him all the booty he had retaken, and desired only his subjects, the prisoners, to be restored. But Abraham, too generous to take advantage of the miseries of war, reserving to the confederates such a proportion of the plunder as by the law of arms belonged to them, returned all the rest, both goods and prisoners, to the lately-distressed monarch.

Abraham's deportment upon this occasion was so very acceptable to God, that he was pleased, in another vision, to give him fresh assurances

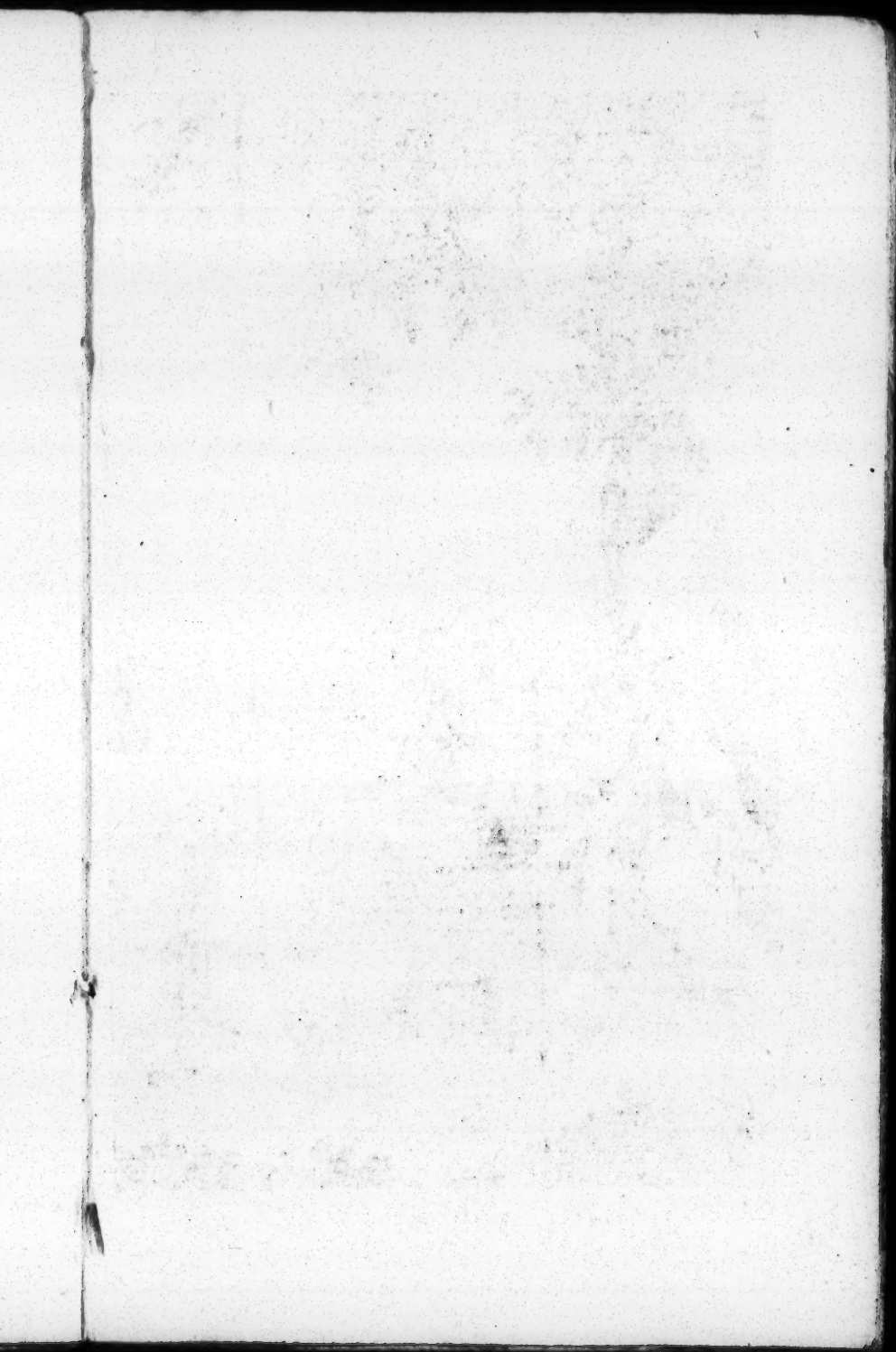
assurances of his special favour, and to promise him the peculiar blessing of a son; that should issue from his own loins, and be the glorious predecessor of a numerous race. Ten years had Sarah now expected the performance of God's promise, and judging, by the course of nature, it could never be fulfilled in her, she prevailed with him to take his hand-maid Hagar to be his secondary wife; not without hope, that, should her maid conceive by her husband, the child would be reputed hers, and her house be established in the completion of the divine promise.

It was not long before Hagar accordingly did conceive: but forgetting her former condition of life, and reflecting only on the honour she had received, she behaved in so insolent and indiscreet a manner towards her mistress, that Sarah, disdaining this usage from her slave, complained to her husband, who, willing to make her easy, and withal to discountenance any disrespectful carriage towards her, permitted her to treat her just as she pleased. This licence gave Sarah an opportunity of expressing her resentment with too much severity, which the other not able to bear, stole from her master's house, and wandering towards her own country, which was Egypt, was, as she was refreshing by a fountain, accosted by an angel, who prevailed on her (after assuring her of a child,
who

who should be the head of a numerous race) to return to her mistress, and submit to her pleasure.

At the birth of Ishmael (the son of Hagar) Abraham was in his eighty-sixth year ; and lest he should, in the excess of his joy, mistake this child for the promised one, God renewed his covenant with him, instituted the rite of circumcision, and, to compleat his happiness, assured him, that his wife Sarah should bear him a son, within the compass of a year, in which should center the full completion of his former promises. At the end of the vision he betook himself (according to the divine command) to the circumcising of himself, his son, and all the males in his family, which ordinance is still preserved among the Hebrews to this day.

It was about this time, that Abraham, sitting at the door of his tent, was addressed by three persons, whom he took to be travellers ; and, after having civilly invited them in, spread a table for them under the covert of a shady oak, where they dined ; after which these three heavenly guests (for these seeming travellers were really angels) rising up to proceed on their journey, Abraham very courteously attended them some part of the way. Their road lay towards Sodom, whither two of them advanced with haste ; but the third, continuing with Abraham, began
to





Abraham entertaining the three Angels.

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM. 21

to reveal a most dreadful secret, viz. That the iniquity of Sodom, and the other neighbouring cities, was arrived at that prodigious height, that he was now going down with an intent to destroy them, if, upon enquiry, he found their abominations equal to the report of them. The goodness of God in condescending to communicate his design to Abraham, encouraged him to make intercession for the wicked inhabitants of those cities, which he managed so well as to bring the angel at last to a concession, that if even ten just persons could be found in Sodom, he would not destroy it; and with this conditional promise he left Abraham.

But these wicked cities, notwithstanding this gentle resolution in their favour, coming far short of the stipulated number of good men, were that very night destroyed by fire from heaven; so that when Abraham, the next morning, looked towards the country, he saw it all in smoke; after which he retired to a city belonging to the Philistines, where the same adventure happened to him that he had met with in Egypt, viz. The king falling in love with his wife Sarah; and as she here likewise passed for his sister, she would certainly have been taken to the royal bed, had not God miraculously interposed; in consequence of which Abraham was again admonished against passing his wife for his sister,

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sister, received several handsome presents from the monarch, and became upon very friendly terms with him.

But the year being now passed, and the time appointed come, Sarah brought forth a son, whom Abraham, according to the divine direction, called Isaac, and circumcised him the eighth day. They were now at the height of their happiness: Sarah suckled the child herself, and weaned him at the usual time. Abraham made a great feast upon the occasion; but in the midst of their festivity, Sarah perceiving that Ishmael (her husband's son by her maid) treated her child with contempt, was so enraged, that she never ceased importuning her husband to turn both mother and son out of doors. 'Tis true, Abraham loved the boy, and was loth to part with him: however, God confirming what Sarah had requested, and moreover promising to make Ishmael the father of a great nation, he was at length prevailed upon, and Hagar with the lad, then about nine years old, were sent away into the wilderness.

Now Abraham having planted a grove for a place of religious worship, and built an altar, continued his daily supplications to the divine majesty, when that power, whose wisdom is not to be fathomed, was determined to make one trial more of his servant's faith and fidelity, and a severe one it was. God had
ordered

ordered him to withdraw his protection from Ishmael ; but at the same time promised, that Isaac should enjoy all that happiness which he had foretold to Abraham's posterity, and to be the progenitor of a numerous race. However he was now pleased to require him with his own hands to destroy this his son, his only son Isaac ; a cruel injunction : but Abraham never stayed to expostulate, but on the contrary, the very next morning, without saying a word to any of his family, got all things ready, and leaving God to fulfil his own promises, resolves to obey him. Taking therefore his son Isaac with him, with provisions and instruments proper for the sacrifice, he arrived at the place which God had appointed for that dreadful scene. Here, without betraying the least sign of grief or concern for the horrid deed he was about to execute, he begins the preparations. The son, on the other hand, perceiving nothing proper for a victim, could not forbear asking his father where it was ? Such a question, and at such a time, was sufficient to have staggered any heart less firm than that of Abraham, who only answered calmly, That God would provide himself with one, little thinking how prophetically he spoke ; for he had no sooner bound his son upon the wood, and stretched out his hand to give the fatal blow, but God was pleased to stop him short
by

24 THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM.

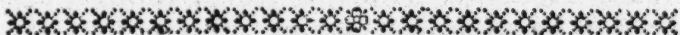
by a voice from heaven, declaring, however, a satisfaction in this last test of his obedience. Surprized at the voice, Abraham turned about to see whence it came; and spying a ram caught by his horns, he immediately seized it, and offered it up instead of his son. This transaction had not been long over, when Sarah, Abraham's wife, died in the one hundred and twenty-seventh year, and was buried in a piece of ground purchased by him on purpose; after he had mourned for her, according to the custom of the country.

But by this time Abraham was well advanced in years; and being desirous to see his son Isaac married and settled in the world, before he died, he ordered Eliazar, the steward of his household, to procure his son a wife of his own kindred, and, for that purpose, sent him into Mesopotamia, with full instructions, and a train suitable to such an embassy. Eliazar, after a prosperous journey, acquitted himself in all things according to his master's pleasure. He opened to his relations the occasion of his coming, and having delivered his credentials, demanded immediately their positive answer, whether they would give him the beautiful virgin Rebecca, whom, by a mark from heaven, he pitched upon for the wife of Isaac, to carry back with him. The hand of providence was plainly in the affair, and therefore they, without farther hesitation, con-

consented; when Eliezar, impatient to acquaint Abraham with the joyful tidings, desired to be dismissed, which, tho' with some reluctance, was granted; so, after the usual blessings on these occasions, taking Rebecca, with proper servants to attend her, he conveyed his fair charge to his master's house, where Isaac, charmed with her appearance, not long after married her.

After this happy marriage of his son, Abraham, still finding himself strong enough to make a new addition to his family, took another wife, whose name was Keturah, by whom he had six sons. But lest they should interfere with Isaac, as they grew up, he portioned them off, and sent them away towards the east, where, settling in Arabia and Syria, they became, in time, heads of different nations.

This is the substance of what we find related of the great patriarch Abraham: and at length, laden with honours, and worn out with age, after he had lived the space of one hundred and twenty-five years, he took leave of the world; and by his two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, was buried in the same vault, where, above forty years before, he had reposed the remains of his beloved wife Sarah, leaving a name famous to all posterity behind him.



R E F L E C T I O N.

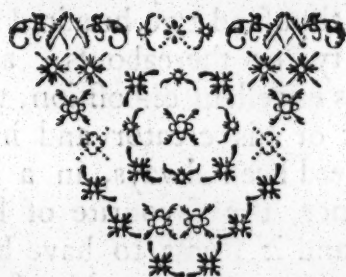
ONE great error in those who have endeavoured to vindicate the holy scriptures is the being unwilling to suppose any faults in the lives of the ancient patriarchs. Their opinion is, That the holy spirit has prescribed them, as examples, every way worthy of our imitation ; whereas the scriptures mean no such thing. Their purpose is to represent mankind, as they really are, cloathed with infirmities, and beset with temptations to sin ; and it is a glorious evidence of their truth, that we find the faults of some of their greatest worthies set in a true light, without any extenuation or excuse. Abraham, in the age wherein he lived, was certainly accounted a man of great piety and worth ; but notwithstanding this, it must be acknowledged, that in the instance of his denying his wife Sarah, when he said she was his sister, he was guilty of a manifest dissimulation at least, if not of telling a direct lie ; either of which crimes, were it possible for them to be committed by an angel from heaven, we should detest and avoid as the worst

worst of evils. Indeed if persons tolerate themselves in ever so small a deviation from the truth, they are not fit members of society, as they do what in them lies to destroy all faith and dependance among men. Truth may be blamed, but it can never be shamed, is a vulgar, but very just proverb ; and when we hear of the two kings sharply reprovng Abraham for his falshood, we should regard it as the voice of God, admonishing from the mouth of an heathen, as the most effectual method to shame him into his duty. In the like manner there are many other circumstances in the patriarch Abraham's life, which we are not to look upon as patterns given us to copy. His taking his maid Hagar, *for example*, for a concubine ; and his afterwards turning her and her child out of doors, at his wife's desire ; were, in regard to the early age he lived in, and the immediate direction of God which he was under, in him no crimes. Though we may observe, that the divine favour was bestowed on the concubine and her son, in a manner very short of what was experienced by Abraham's lawful issue : But such a conduct in any man at this day would be a most heinous breach of all laws ; adultery, exaggerated by cruelty and injustice ; and even the offering up of his son Isaac as a sacrifice, which makes perhaps one of the

most shining parts of this patriarch's character, should only serve as an example to recommend to us an implicit obedience to the word of God. But so vile an action as murder could never be pleasing to God, who has not only warned us from it, but in a particular manner recommended to us a tenderness for the lives of all creatures; and even those which we are permitted to make use of as food, we are expressly commanded not to put to any unnecessary torture. Nor was God's commands to Abraham to sacrifice his son any thing more than a tryal of his faith; as we see he had taken care to provide himself a proper offering. We are therefore to square our behaviour to Abraham's in this particular, thus: we are to deny ourselves our most favourite enjoyments, if contrary to God's holy will and command, and to do every thing, however contrary to our own will and inclinations, which his word seems to imply.

But nothing in Abraham's character is so conspicuous, as the great respect he paid to the public worship of God; which, next to the purity of his heart, and the rectitude of his intentions, was the great means of drawing down a blessing upon himself and upon his posterity for many ages after him. Let our young readers therefore be taught by
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the foregoing life; that a frequent attendance upon divine worship, and a fervency of devotion there; together with a steady adherence to the principles of religion in all things, is the surest method of quiet here, and happiness hereafter.

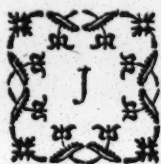


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THE



THE LIFE OF
J O S E P H.



JOSEPH, the son of Jacob, and great grandson of Abraham, was born in the year of the world two thousand two hundred and seventy, or thereabouts ; and on account of his excellent disposition, was equally the delight of his creator and his parents. He had indeed been always, in a very particular manner, the favourite of his mother Rachael ; and it seems to have been partly in regard to her memory, (for she was now dead) that his father distinguished him, by giving him richer cloaths than he did the rest of his children. However, this distinction was so far attended with bad consequences to poor Joseph, that it made his brothers hate him. They also looked upon him as a spy, because he had told their father of their misbehaviour, when out of his presence. But what was still a higher aggravation, he openly, and perhaps with a secret pride too, related

lated to them two particular dreams of his own, which portended his future advancement over them ; and raised their resentment to such a height, that they resolved at last to destroy him, and only waited for a convenient opportunity.

It happened, shortly after this, that Joseph's brothers were keeping their flocks at a considerable distance from home ; when their father, not having heard from them for some time, sent Joseph to find them out, and know how they did. This accident gave them an opportunity to put their malicious designs in execution ; and he had certainly fell a victim to their fury, had not Reuben, who was the eldest, interposed, and dissuading them from imbruing their hands in his blood, advised rather to throw him into the next pit, with a design himself afterwards to draw him privately out, and convey him safe home to his father. Reuben's advice was approved ; and therefore, as soon as Joseph came up to them, they immediately seized him, pulled off his fine coat, and threw him into a hole ; and, without the least remorse, sat down to eat and drink. As they were thus regaling themselves, a company of merchants advanced towards them, which they observing, ran instantly and drew up Joseph, and, for a trifling sum, sold their unhappy brother to these traders. Reuben not being present when

when this was done, came soon after to the pit ; but how great was his distraction at missing Joseph ! He returned to his brothers, who, to pacify his grief, were under a necessity of informing him what they had done ; and he finding his despair was vain, and willing to make the best of the misfortune, entered into a scheme they had formed, to delude their father.

Now as the merchants were going into Egypt, they carried Joseph with them directly to court ; where they soon disposed of him, at an advanced price, to Potiphar, a captain of Pharaoh's guards.

Joseph was at this time in the bloom of his youth ; and from his admission into Potiphar's family, gave such extraordinary proofs of his diligence and abilities, as soon attracted the attention of his master ; and, in the end, raised him to the chief post in the family. In this condition Joseph lived very happy, when an adventure somewhat singular interrupted his present enjoyments. As his place in the family gave him frequent access to his mistress ; she could not behold the great beauty of his person without conceiving the most irregular passion for him. She gave him several indications of her esteem ; but Joseph, blind to her signs, and deaf to her insinuating speeches, at last provoked her to break through all restraint, and infringing the
virtuous

virtuous rules of her sex, attacked him in such a manner, as left him no room to doubt of her vicious intentions. But instead of compliance with her wishes, and ardent returns of her love, she found herself unexpectedly repulsed, and severely reprimanded for her loose and disloyal behaviour. Flattering herself, however, that another opportunity might prove more favourable, she at last laid hold on one, when all the family were abroad, and accosted him in so violent and passionate a manner, as left him reason to think she would bear no denial. In vain did he expostulate; virtue had no charms for her; for she, inflamed by his resistance, and abandoned to all modesty, without the least reserve, seized upon his cloak, and with many intreaties pressed him strongly to lie with her, and drove him at last to the necessity of quitting her abruptly; for leaving his cloak in her hand, he slipped from her embraces, and fled from her presence. Enraged at this slight, hatred succeeded love; and nothing now would content her soul, but his immediate ruin: to accomplish which she instantly set up so horrid an outcry, as presently brought all that were within hearing together; when shewing them Joseph's cloak, and pretending he had taken it off, in order to force her; she told them, he made such furious attempts upon her virtue, that
nothing

nothing but her loud shrieks could possibly have saved her. By the time Potiphar returned, she had dressed up so plausible a story, and expressed the pretended indignity put upon her with such an air of resentment, that the too credulous husband, little suspecting the treachery of his lewd consort, and strongly prepossessed with the circumstance of the cloak, delivered up the virtuous Joseph a victim to her fury, and gave immediate orders for throwing this faithful servant into the king's prison.

But Joseph had not been long there, before his extraordinary virtue and wisdom began to appear, and occasioned the keeper to be as indulgent to him as his former master. He had a peculiar talent from heaven of interpreting dreams ; and having happily explained some to a couple of his fellow prisoners of great rank ; the king, about two years after, having a very remarkable one, which gave him no small uneasiness, Joseph was, by instigation of one of the courtiers, (then at large) brought forth from the prison ; and being come before Pharaoh, heard the dreams, and was ordered to expound them. The dreams, by Joseph's interpretation, denoted a seven years plenty, succeeded by a seven years famine ; which gave the monarch so high an idea of his wisdom, that he condescended to ask his advice, how he should manage in
those

those extraordinary times. Joseph, without the least hesitation, modestly advised the king to take advantage of the first seven years, by filling his storehouses and granaries, as repositories for the last. This scheme was also highly approved, and put into immediate execution: And as every thing came to pass just as Joseph had foretold it, he was afterwards made steward of all the king's household, and manager, under Pharaoh, over the whole kingdom of Egypt. In consequence of this, Joseph took a progress through the provinces, built granaries, appointed proper officers in every place; and in short ordered all things with such prudence and application, that before the seven years of plenty were expired, he had amassed corn enough to supply both Egypt and the neighbouring countries.

Now in the second year of the famine, Jacob hearing that there was corn to be bought in Egypt, sent his sons thither; who, upon their arrival, were directed to apply to Joseph. He knew them at first sight; but being minded to terrify them a little, he spoke by an interpreter, and accused them of being spies, who had come with an intent to discover the weakness of the country. They replied, they came with no other design than purely to buy corn for their numerous family; that they were the sons of one man, who

once

once had twelve, but that the youngest was left at home, and the next to him dead. He answered with a severe look, (to put their honesty to the proof) that since by their own confession they had a younger brother, one should be immediately dispatched to fetch him; otherwise he should look upon all of them as spies and enemies, and their story trump'd up to impose upon him; and, upon this, ordered them all to prison, till they should come to a resolution.

After some time, however, he sent for them again, and with a milder air told them, he was loath their family should want provision, or that they should suffer, if innocent. He then proposed this alternative, that one of them should be confined as an hostage for the rest, while they returned with corn for their family; and that upon bringing back their youngest brother, the confined person should be released, and all of them reputed honest men. As he had them at his mercy, they consented to do whatever he required; reflecting in this distress notwithstanding on their former treatment of their brother, looking upon the present misfortunes as a judgment for that wicked action; and as they upbraided one another in this manner in the presence of Joseph, thinking he did not understand them, it affected him so much, that he was obliged to withdraw, till recovering himself, he returned, and com-

commanded their sacks to be filled with corn, and giving secret orders, that each man's money should be put in the mouth of the sack, he ordered them to depart, leaving one as an hostage till the rest should return. We need not say, that when these cruel brothers came to bait, and give their beasts some provender, they were not a little surprised to find their money returned, nor failed they to make all the dismal reflections thereon, which their fears could suggest.

As soon as they got home, they acquainted their father with these adventures ; but in vain was it for them to strive to prevail with Jacob to let his youngest son Benjamin go back with them into Egypt. He was a child by his best beloved wife Rachael, who died in bringing him into the world, and own brother to Joseph. However, what no intreaties of his sons could accomplish, necessity at last brought him to consent to. In a word, their provisions grew short, and in Egypt alone they could find relief. Jacob therefore directing his sons to take a double quantity of money, and such presents as the country afforded, he with much grief delivered his dear Benjamin to his other sons ; and intreating heaven for their success, sent them away. As soon as they arrived in Egypt, they went directly and presented themselves to Joseph, who seeing their brother Benjamin with

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them, gave orders to his steward to conduct them to his house, where they should dine that day. Joseph was himself to come home by noon, and therefore his brothers took care to have their presents in readiness. He received them all with a very friendly countenance, enquired after the health of their father, and took notice of Benjamin; but finding his affection begin to work on that occasion, he retired to vent his passion. Soon after however he ordered dinner to be served up, which was accordingly done upon three different tables, one for Joseph, one for his Egyptian guests, and one for his brothers.

During the whole entertainment, Joseph behaved very courteously; from his own table he sent dishes to every one of his brothers, but to Benjamin he sent five dishes for each of their one, which was a mystery they could not unriddle, any more than their being placed at table according to their exact seniority. After they had finished, and were taking leave, in order to return to their business, Joseph being minded to frighten them once more, ordered his steward, when he filled their sacks with corn, to put the money in as before; but into Benjamin's sack, not only the money, but the silver cup out of which he himself used to drink; which being done accordingly, after they were gone a little way out of town, a person was sent after to overtake

overtake and charge them with the felony. Conscious of their own innocence, and disdainful of so vile an accusation, they offered their sacks to be searched; and whoever should be found to have the cup, should not only suffer death, but the rest be made slaves. But when the cup was found in Benjamin's sack, what was their grief and astonishment! 'Twas in vain for the poor youth to say any thing in his defence; and being all concerned in the disgrace, they loaded their asses, and in a mournful manner returned to the city again.

Joseph, on their arrival, reprimanded them sharply; while they lay prostrate at his feet, and acknowledged their guilt. But at last he told them, the person only that was detected in the theft should remain a slave, and the others, when they pleased, might return home to their father. Judah, who had been particularly responsible for Benjamin, addressed Joseph in the most submissive and pathetic manner imaginable. He described very passionately their father's melancholy condition for the loss of his beloved sons; one dead, and the other snatched involuntarily from his arms; and whose great age left him doubtful of ever seeing him again: and as his life seem'd wrapped up in the child, offered himself an equivalent for his brother, provided he might be restored to his father. This

moving speech affected Joseph in such a manner, that not able any longer to withstand it, he ordered all the company out of the room, that he might be left at liberty to discover himself with a more affectionate freedom to his brothers. But no sooner had he made himself known to them, than, struck with surprise and confusion, they stood dumb; and it was some time before they recovered sufficient to make him any answer at all. Affected however as he was, he desired them to draw near unto him, embraced them all round with an unfeigned tenderness, and, to dispel all future apprehensions, told them, he had more reason to bless than condemn them for what they did, since it had been the means of advancing him to the honour and dignity of the nation they beheld him in. He bid them hasten to their father, tell him of his new-found son, and invited him to come and share with him of his greatness and glory; that he should have a province assigned for him to dwell in, not far distant from him, and truly commodious for such as led a pastoral life. And with that he threw himself upon Benjamin's neck, and wept for joy; and being perfectly reconciled to all the rest, by his generous treatment dispelled their fears, and brought them to converse with him in a more familiar manner.

With



Joseph meets his father Jacob in his Journey to Egypt and kneels for a Blessing.

With hearts full of joy, king Pharaoh having confirmed Joseph's invitation and promises to his father, these now joyful brethren proceeded on their return to the land of Canaan, where they were gladly received by good old Jacob. But when they told him, that his son Joseph was alive, and what splendor he lived in, not able to bear so much good news, he fainted away in their arms. Joseph had, by Potiphar's command, besides presents, sent chariots, provisions, and all necessaries for their father's journey into Egypt. These when Jacob came to himself, his sons shewed him, which so revived his spirits, that in an extacy of joy he cried out, It is enough ! Joseph my son is still alive. I will go and see him e're I die.

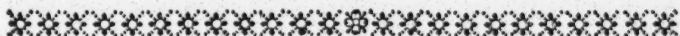
The meeting of the father and son, upon Jacob's arrival in Egypt, words cannot describe. Tears of joy flowed on both sides ; and as soon as the tender greetings, and solemn rejoycings which followed upon them, were over, Joseph went to court, and presented his whole family to the king, who received them in the most gracious manner, and settled them in the most fertile province of the whole kingdom.

Jacob lived many years after this, during which time Joseph continued to perform not only all the duties of a son to him ; but all

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the services of a good minister to his master, king Pharaoh; appearing to have equally at heart the welfare of the sovereign and the people; and at length his father dying in his arms, after having blessed his children in a very particular manner, he remained fifty-four years longer at the head of affairs in Egypt, generously persisting in his friendship and affection to his brothers, notwithstanding the evil they intended him in the early part of his life.

At his death he gave strict orders, that when it should please God to bring the Hebrews out of the kingdom of Egypt, in order to put them in possession of that country which was promised to the posterity of Abraham, they should take his body along with them. The Jewish rabbins indeed have a story, that the Egyptian magicians came and told Pharaoh, if he had a mind to keep the Hebrews in his dominions, he must hide Joseph's body in some place where they could never find it, because it would be impossible to leave Egypt without it. That thereupon his corps was put in a heavy chest, which was sunk in the river Nile; and Moses was forced by a miracle to get it out: but this is a fiction, without any manner of foundation.



R E F L E C T I O N.

AMongst all the lives of eminent persons, with which the holy scriptures supply us, there is not one of a more excellent tendency, or which is fitter to put into the hands of a young person, than the foregoing entertaining and admirable account of Joseph; which is a rare example of what a man ought to be, and what he always might be, by shewing what he once was.

But what moralists have chiefly chosen to recommend from the life of Joseph, is chastity, the virtue which of all others seems to be most agreeable and consonant to the divine nature; the person perfectly chaste, being as near perfection as the mortal state is capable of; for as much as the preservation of strict chastity (I mean according to the rules which nature and reason have prescribed) is the means of keeping under almost every vice which the human frame is subject to; but we may justly suppose, that Joseph's refusal of Potiphar's wife was also the effects of gratitude to his kind master, who had generously promoted him, from the meanest station, that of a slave, to the command of his whole family; an example well worthy imitation!

For

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For sure those who have not a conscientiousness in doing an injury to the person, from whose bounty they receive food, cloaths, and all the comforts of life, must have the worst of hearts; not to mention, that God has commanded us particularly to reverence our superiors, (which words have a large import) and especially those who have any authority over us.

Yet methinks I would not recommend to my young readers Joseph's example, when by telling tales of his brothers, he angered his father against them. He was certainly right not to join in any misconduct he might have observed in them; but he should have been content with reprehending their follies himself, or at least have taken some step to bring them to their duty, different from that of accusing them to their father. I think he was wrong also in setting himself above his brothers, as he did when he told those dreams: however, it must be owned, he made amends for those childish faults, by his behaviour to them when they came into Egypt, where, tho' he had ample power in his hands to be revenged on them for their cruel treatment of him, in throwing him into the pit, and afterwards selling him for a slave, he was so far from taking an advantage of it, that, contenting himself with a little innocent trial of their tempers, he was a protector of them
and

and their families to the day of his death ; never considering the mischief they intended him, but the good which he reaped from their inhuman usage.

But we can never sufficiently recommend that duty, affection, and respect, which Joseph manifested for his old father, when, though little less than a king in Egypt, he received him with the utmost reverence, waited on him to Pharaoh, and was most observant and careful of him, till at length he expired in his arms.

In a word, whether we consider Joseph in the light of a son, a brother, or a servant, we shall find him highly worthy of imitation. As the first, he was dutiful, tender, and respectful ; as the second, he was gentle, affectionate, and forgiving ; and as the last, he was honourable, trusty, and grateful. There never was a prime minister upon earth, that might not be proud of copying him in his public station, in which, while he was bent to raise the riches and glory of his master, he was equally careful not to oppress or impoverish the people ; and if we add to this, the great deference which he always paid to every thing belonging to God and religion, there never was a more perfect character.



THE LIFE OF
M O S E S,

The Jewish LAW-GIVER.

 OSES, who was one of the greatest men that ever appeared upon earth, whether we consider him with regard to the intercourse which he had with God, his high rank in life, or his own great talents and virtues, was the son of Amram, by his wife Jochabed, of the Hebrew race, and born to them while that nation resided in Egypt. As his whole life was miraculous, so there was something very extraordinary attending his birth ; for some years after the death of Joseph, a new king coming to the throne of Egypt, and the Israelites having, in the mean time increased exceedingly, the monarch was afraid lest, as their numbers put it in their power, so they might have it in their inclination, to usurp the sovereign authority ; and there-





Moses in the Bulrushes.

therefore gave orders, that all the male children of the Hebrews should be put to death as soon as they came into the world ; an edict which, as we may well suppose, threw that unhappy people into the utmost grief and consternation.

Now Amram finding his wife with child, and being solicitous about the king's proclamation, prayed earnestly to God to put an end to this dreadful persecution ; upon which the Almighty appeared to him, and told him, that he would in due time free his people from it ; and that the son, who should shortly be born unto him, should prove the happy instrument of their deliverance. In consequence of this, when Jochabed was delivered of a lovely boy, her husband made no difficulty of joining with her to preserve it, till at length, fearing the discovery, when he was about three months old, he determined to commit him to the providence of God ; and having made a little basket of rushes, and plaistered it to keep out the water, Jochabed plac'd the poor infant in it, and leaving it among the flags, by the bank of the river, she placed his little sister at a proper distance to mark the event. As good luck would have it, the king's daughter, attended with her maids of honour, came to the river soon after, in order to bathe herself ; and spying the basket at some distance, she ordered one of
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the company to fetch it to her ; when uncovering the little repository of the babe, and observing its surprising beauty and distress, it so moved her heart with compassion, that tho' she very well perceived it was one of the unhappy children mentioned in the edict, yet she was fully resolved, in spite of that cruel decree, to declare her intentions to preserve it. The princess Thermuttis (for that was the name of Pharaoh's daughter) having sent successively for several Egyptian nurses, the child with the utmost scorn rejected them all ; which Miriam (the child's sister) observing, told the princess 'twas in vain to expect their milk could agree with it, being of a different nation, and artfully insinuated, if she wished the boy to thrive, she should immediately order a Hebrew nurse. No sooner had the princess given directions to pursue this advice, than with the utmost speed she hastened to her mother, who instantly returned, and taking the infant from the princess, received at the same time an assurance of being well rewarded for the care she should bestow on it.

At a proper age the child was carried by his mother to court, and presented to the princess ; and his early charms so engaged her affections, that in the height of fondness, she adopted him for her own ; and, in remembrance of his being taken out of the river, gave him the Egyptian name of Moses.

As

As his parents had taken particular care to instruct him in the religion and history of his ancestors, he soon imbibed an early aversion to the oppressors of his nation ; and the more, as he was himself an eye-witness of the cruel usage of the Egyptian task-masters. This raised his indignation to that degree, that, one day, observing an Hebrew used in a very gross manner by one of them, he stepped in to his assistance, and killing the Egyptian, delivered his wretched countryman from the insult, and afterwards buried the body in the sands. This affair, however, was not so secretly transacted, but that, walking out the next day, and seeing two Hebrews engaged in a dispute, and generously interposing to make up the matter, he was, to his great surprise, suddenly upbraided by one of them, with his murder of the Egyptian the day before. Justly the more, apprehending the thing might reach Pharaoh's ears, and endanger his life, he presently concluded, it would be his best way to leave Egypt, and take shelter in the country of the Midianites. Here an adventure soon recommended him to the friendship of the inhabitants ; for at a well, at which he had stopped to refresh himself, seven daughters of the principal man in the country, coming to draw water for their flocks, some rude shepherds seized on what they had drawn, and

frightened the damsels away. Moses resenting this injury, attacked the shepherds, forced them to retire, and once more replenished the vessels of the terrified virgins. This act of courage and justice soon reached the ears of Jethro, who, being informed by his daughters, what civility they had met with from a stranger, who had protected them from the insults of the rusticks, immediately invited him to his house, and treated him in a manner suitable to the civility he had shewn to his daughters. Moses, pleased with so courteous a reception, hinted a willingness to remain with the father, and become his shepherd. Jethro accepted the proposal, and to attach him the stronger to his interest, gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage.

While Moses was in this retirement, the king he had left upon the Egyptian throne had paid his debt to nature, but was succeeded by a greater tyrant than himself; who oppressed the Israelites in such a manner, and made their lives so extremely miserable, that their complaints reached Heaven, which interesting itself in a peculiar manner in their favour, by visions and other signs to its servant Moses, made known to him their distress, in order to engage him to receive its commands for their future deliverance. Moses had by this time laid aside all thoughts of rescuing his countrymen; and therefore, whether from

from a mean opinion of his own abilities, or from the difficulty of the undertaking, he began to make excuses to God, and urged his meanness and insufficiency to take upon him the character of a divine ambassador. But the Almighty removed this difficulty by assuring him, he would assist him in every step he took, and make good his promises to the ancestors of the Israelites; that he would invest him with such supernatural and divine power, as by the force of the miracles that should be wrought in their favour, the wicked monarch should be compelled, in spite of his inclinations to the contrary, to let them go. By these persuasions, and demonstrations of a miraculous power to support him, Moses at length was prevailed on to accept the commission; and requesting leave of Jethro (who readily complied) to visit his brethren in Egypt, he immediately set out, and soon after his arrival, with a brother he had, called Aaron, who, by the particular appointment of God, was made his associate in this great affair, quickly gained admission to the king; and modestly petitioned for an indulgence of a few days, that their countrymen might retire into the wilderness to worship God. But he absolutely refused to grant their requests, suspecting, that they had a design to revolt from his service; which so irritated him, that, after having severely re-

primanded Moses and Aaron for encouraging the people to idleness, he doubled their duty. This hard unprecedented usage drove these miserable creatures to despair. They applied to the king, but found no redress; and meeting with Moses in their return from court, charged him as the author of all their present misery. His concern for the oppression of the people, and being the innocent cause of the present disorders, by his unsuccessful attempt with Pharaoh, strongly tempted him to distrust the promises of the Almighty; and, after expostulating the matter with God, who still continued to give him the strongest assurances of his performing all his promises to his people, he dismissed him with these tidings to the Israelitee. Yet such was the affliction of their minds, that they gave little or no attention to him.

Moses, however, was commanded by God to renew his petition for the release of his people; and, in case of Pharaoh's obstinacy, to immediately put in practice that power he had given him for the commission of miracles. He and his brother Aaron therefore repaired to court, but met with the usual repulse; and when the king, in contempt, demanded some miracle as a proof of their divine mission, Aaron threw down his rod, which was instantly changed into a serpent. Pharaoh then sent for his magicians, and commanded them

them to do the same. They attempted, and succeeded ; but with this remarkable difference, that the rod of Aaron immediately swallowed up those of the forcerers, and must, beyond all dispute, have easily convinced the proud monarch of the superiority of Israel's God, had not the strong interest he had, in not letting the Hebrews go, shut up every avenue of conviction.

In short, hardened by hatred, and a slave to avarice, he was deaf to their cries ; and to the intreaties of Moses ; and did not, till after a train of the most dismal and shocking plagues that ever distressed a nation, give them permission to leave his kingdom ; and then, upon such terms as they would by no means consent to : That they should either leave their children, as hostages for their coming back ; or their flocks and their herds : rightly conjecturing, that this might be a means to accelerate their return. But Moses positively insisted upon taking all their substance with them, and that the young should accompany the old ; which so exasperated the monarch, that he forbid him his presence upon pain of death. Moses finding nothing could be done with the king, threatened, as he went away, that that very night God should strike dead the eldest child of every family in the kingdom of Egypt ; nor were these words spoken in vain. And at this

time, in commemoration of the favour which God shewed the Israelites, in sparing their children, while he destroyed those of the Egyptians, was instituted a feast, called the Passover, which to this day is celebrated among the Jews.

God had ordered Moses to prepare every thing for the departure of the people; and about the middle of the night, the eldest male of every house in Egypt, both man and beast, from the palace to the cottage, suddenly expired. The outcry and confusion that succeeded this terrible judgment, may easily be conceived; and the Egyptians coming immediately to Moses, in a great terror, besought him to get his countrymen together, and with all that belonged to them, to go out of the country as fast as they could. This was what Moses wanted, and accordingly, without the least delay, every one packing up his goods, together with vast riches, which, by God's direction, the Israelites had borrowed of the Egyptians, the whole nation took leave of their task-masters, and made the best of their way into the wilderness. It was mere compulsion, and a fear of worse consequences than those he had already experienced, that wrought upon Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go. But when he heard that they continued their rout towards the Red Sea, instead of returning to
his

his dominions, he resolved to overtake, and oblige them to come back ; to which purpose he mustered up what forces he could, and putting himself at the head of them, instantly began the pursuit. Now when the Egyptians came up with the Israelites, the latter found themselves seemingly in a very terrible situation ; for the sea was in their front, huge mountains on each side, and a powerful army in their rear. Moses, however, being apprised of God's designs, desired them not to fear ; and leading them on to the brink of the water, he stretched his wand over it, upon which the waves immediately divided, and made as it were a wall on each side, while the Israelites passed over upon dry land, till they gained the opposite shore. Upon the Hebrews, first quitting Egypt, God, for their greater security, undertook to guide and direct them in their several marches and encampments, which was done by the wonderful appearance of a cloud, in the form of a large column, which shaded them from the sun by day, and became a pillar of fire, to supply its absence by night. When they passed over the red sea, this cloudy pillar stood between them, and the army of king Pharaoh ; so that the Egyptians were not apprised of their miraculous passage, till they were all got on the other side. However, they never suspected, that they, with their
chariots

chariots and horses might not safely follow, 'till they were too late apprised of this error ; for when they were got about half way, the sea rushing in overwhelmed them all, while the Israelites beheld with amazement the carcases and spoils of their enemies thrown up on every side. A miracle, which one would think sufficient to fix the faith of any people ; yet, notwithstanding so particular a mark of the divine favour in their behalf, the Israelites, upon the least apprehensions of distress, were immediately out of patience.

The barren prospect of the wilderness before them, and their present scarcity of provisions, occasioned them to complain, and even now to upbraid Moses, that he had decoyed them from the plenty they enjoyed in Egypt, into a wide waste, where they could have no other expectation, but to perish with hunger and thirst. Many miracles did the divine power perform by the hand of Moses, to convince them of their error, and get the better of their discontented dispositions ; yet every now and then they fell into their old way of distrusting their God, and reviling their leader : and particular the want of water, at one time, made them so mutinous and desperate, that in vain was it even for Moses to counsel or advise them. His words but inflamed their rage the more, and he would have fallen a victim to their fury, had not God interposed,
and,

and, to pacify their minds and dissipate their fears, promised a miraculous supply of water, which Moses, by his express command, striking a rock with his wand, immediately furnished them with.

About this time the Israelites were alarmed with the approach of an army at their heels, ready to fall upon them. Hereupon Moses ordered Joshua, a valiant young man, at the head of a party of the choicest men in the camp, to give them battle; and while he and Aaron retired to the top of an eminence to implore the divine assistance, Joshua proved successful, and the enemy were put to the rout, and totally defeated. This good success in their first martial enterprise, gave the people great encouragement; and being now arrived at a mount, where God had first manifested his designs to Moses, and not far from the place where his father-in-law dwelt. Jethro, who hearing of the mighty things that were done by the Israelites under the command of his daughter's husband, took her (Zipporah) and the two sons of Moses, which were left in his charge, and brought them with him to the Israelites camp, where, after mutual salutations and embraces, Moses entertained him with a particular account of every thing that had befallen him during his absence.

While

While Jethro remained in the camp, he could not but observe the great weight of business which Moses daily laboured under in determining differences in the camp, he advised him therefore to share it with others, by substituting men of probity and abilities to adjust the complaints of the Israelites, and distribute equity to the people. And as soon as he saw this council put in execution, he took leave of his son-in-law, and returned into his own country.

Now as the Israelites lay before Mount Sinai, God thought proper to call up his servant Moses ; and after charging him to remind the Israelites of the many wonders he had wrought in their favour, he promised, if for the future they would become obedient to his laws, he would still regard them as his peculiar people, a favourite nation, and a royal priesthood. This, upon Moses acquainting them with the conference and proposals, they directly consented to, and promised all possible obedience to the divine commands. On the third day therefore the people being commanded to attend, received from God's own mouth, in an extraordinary and tremendous manner, the ten commandments ; and soon after Moses received from God several other ceremonial and political laws, calculated with a design to keep the people to their obedience, and prevent their
inter-

intermixing the blood of the Israelites with other nations.

But while Moses was conversing with God, and receiving his further commands, together with the two tables of stone, on which were engraved the moral law ; the people, by his long absence, for he had retired from them forty days, despairing of ever beholding him again, assembled themselves in a riotous manner about Aaron's tent, and demanded of him some God that they might worship ; who, instead of expostulating the matter with them, tamely submitted, and, in a great measure, contributed to their idolatry. He made them, for the object of their adoration, a golden calf ; and seeing them wonderfully delighted with it, placed it upon a high pedestal in full sight of the camp ; and, after having performed a solemn sacrifice to it, concluded it with all kinds of feasting and noisy mirth. This provoking defection, after what God had so graciously done for them, wore out his patience, and he threatened, in the severest manner, to extirpate the whole race of these ungrateful rebels. But Moses having generously interceded for them, and obtained a promise of pardon, with his tables of stone, and, attended by his servant Joshua, he hastened from the presence of God, and descended the mount with the utmost expedition. At sight of the golden calf, he could no longer
restrain

restrain his anger, and, in the height of his indignation, threw down the tables he had in his hand, and broke them to pieces. After this, calling his brother Aaron to account, for indulging the people in their idolatrous humour, and chiding him for his weakness, he proceeded to take vengeance on the ringleaders of this disorder, whom he ordered to be slain by the hands of the Levites. Then retiring to the mountain, implored pardon for the sins of the people, and renewed his covenant with God.

To enumerate the many instances, in which the head-strong and ungrateful Jews rejected the mercies of God, and flew in the face of Moses, would take up a greater space than our compendious volumes will allow ; and the many punishments they brought on themselves by their disobedience, were so dreadful ; as at one time by a plague ; another by fire from heaven ; and another by the execution of their own hands, to carry off thousands of them together. Nor was the family of Moses exempt from punishment, on account of their own particular ill behaviour ; till at last God declared, that no more than a certain number of those who left Egypt, should live to enjoy the promised country ; and even Moses himself, by one fatal step, was comprised in this unwelcome interdiction.

It

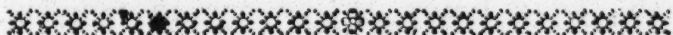
It was not long after the death of Moses's sister Miriam, and the gaining of several considerable battles, against enemies that came on every side to oppose their passage, that the Israelites began their old way of murmuring for want of water ; upon which God ordered Moses to supply them by again speaking to a certain rock : but some way or other he deviated from his instructions, either through impatience or diffidence, and offended God to such a degree, as to deserve a denunciation, that neither he nor his brother Aaron should be permitted to enter into Canaan : soon after which God gave Aaron notice of his approaching death ; and being stripped of his sacerdotal robes, which were put upon his son, that first high priest of the Jews expired, being an hundred and twenty years old. He was buried in a mountain, and lamented by the Israelites for many days.

Many were the vicissitudes which the Israelites experienced during the remainder of their march through the wilderness. On one hand, they fought many battles, conquered numerous nations, and acquired infinite variety of spoils : but, on the other hand, they were plagued with poisonous serpents, put to a thousand horrid deaths, and set up as examples of divine wrath to all the neighbouring people. But it must be observed, that their success was always the effects of

God's mercy to the few virtuous among them; and their misfortunes always the result of a general depravity; when, by committing idolatry, mixing in vicious intercourse with strange nations, and acting directly opposite to the divine commands, they incensed omnipotency against them.

Joshua was appointed by God to succeed Moses in his commission, and the nearer Moses approached his death, the more he expressed his concern for the welfare of the people. In the fortieth year, therefore, of their departure out of Egypt, he called the Israelites together, and in a very tender and pathetic speech, related to them all that had befallen them since they left Egypt, the gracious dealings of God with them; their continual murmurings and rebellions against him; he encouraged them, however, to a perseverance in those laws, which the divine goodness had calculated for their happiness; he repeated them to them, and assured them, that as blessings would attend their observance, so the greatest calamities would be the consequence, if they departed from them. He then took a most affectionate farewell of all the tribes; and finding his dissolution was nigh, he went up to the top of a mountain, from whence he had a view of that delicious country into which the Jews were shortly after to enter; and, rejoicing at
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the sight, he in an extasy resign'd his soul to those angels who waited to convey him to heaven ; and, to prevent the people's idolizing him, God himself took care to bury his body in so secret a manner, that the place of his sepulchre was never after discovered.



REFLECTION.

NEver was the justice, the mercy or the omnipotence of God, so strongly exemplified, as in the foregoing history of the life of Moses. We there see him punishing the sins of his favourites, in the most exemplary manner ; and, on the other hand, rewarding their virtuous and good qualities with the most evident marks of his favour and protection. Indeed there is hardly any one character, mentioned throughout the whole, which will not afford us a proper example to regulate our conduct by. In the first place, Moses shews us, that with the grace, and under the providence of God, there are no evils so dreadful, but we can escape them. He was condemned to death, even before his birth ; but being luckily preserved from that, he was afterwards exposed helpless and unbe-

friended, in a place dangerous every where, on the banks of a river, but particularly so in Egypt, where the Nile swarms with venomous creatures, eager for man's destruction. Yet here he was not only preserved, but restored to his afflicted parents by the princess, to whose care he afterwards owed a good education. Thus, through his whole life, by a steady perseverance in religion, and a ready compliance with the will of God in every thing, he had a thousand hair-breadth-escapes; yet this very man was honoured by God as no man before or since ever was. This very Moses felt the effects of the divine displeasure, when, in a matter to us seemingly trifling, he only stepped a little aside, in performing a command, which perhaps he did not clearly understand. How constant ought we to be then in our prayers to God for forgiveness, when the very best of us are liable to offend him in the highest manner every day.

The next person, eminent in his example, is Pharaoh, a dreadful warning against obstinacy; a vice to which we are but too prone, and therefore should keep the strictest guard upon ourselves against it. Had he taken the advice of Moses, what numberless misfortunes might he have avoided! and had he at last suppressed his anger, might he not have escaped that destruction, which he
brought

brought upon himself and his people. This foolish and frantic passion, also, we are all but too subject to; and we should, by every means possible, check ourselves in it, as we see it is dangerous, not only for the time it continues, but as it often prepares and opens the way to lasting and inevitable ruin.

The Jews themselves are the last figures which claim our attention in this piece, and shew us, that there are no hopes, however fair, or means, however powerful, the benefit of which our own ill conduct may not deprive us of. God is the parent of all his creatures alike, and there is no person whom he will not assist, if that person behaves in a manner to deserve his assistance; but if we murmur and repine at providence, at every little disappointment, and pretend to regulate the divine will by our own narrow passions and prejudices, we can only expect to perish like the perverse Jews, while God transfers his favours to objects more deserving of them.





THE LIFE OF
DEBORAH.

IN commemorating the life of this sacred heroine, 'twill be necessary to look a little back into the circumstances of the Jewish nation, at the time she made so extraordinary and successful an effort, as preserved the liberties of a sinking people, and perpetuated her name to all succeeding generations.

The Israelites were at this time distressed and invaded on all sides by their enemies ; but in the north parts of the kingdom they had incensed God so by their impieties, that he had permitted Jabin, a powerful monarch, who at that time assumed the title of the king of Canaan, to oppress them with great severity ; and in order to terrify and keep them under, he put Sisera, an experienced general, at the head of his forces, accompanied with nine hundred armed chariots, together with such a quantity of military ammunition, that the wretched Israelites, despairing of relief,

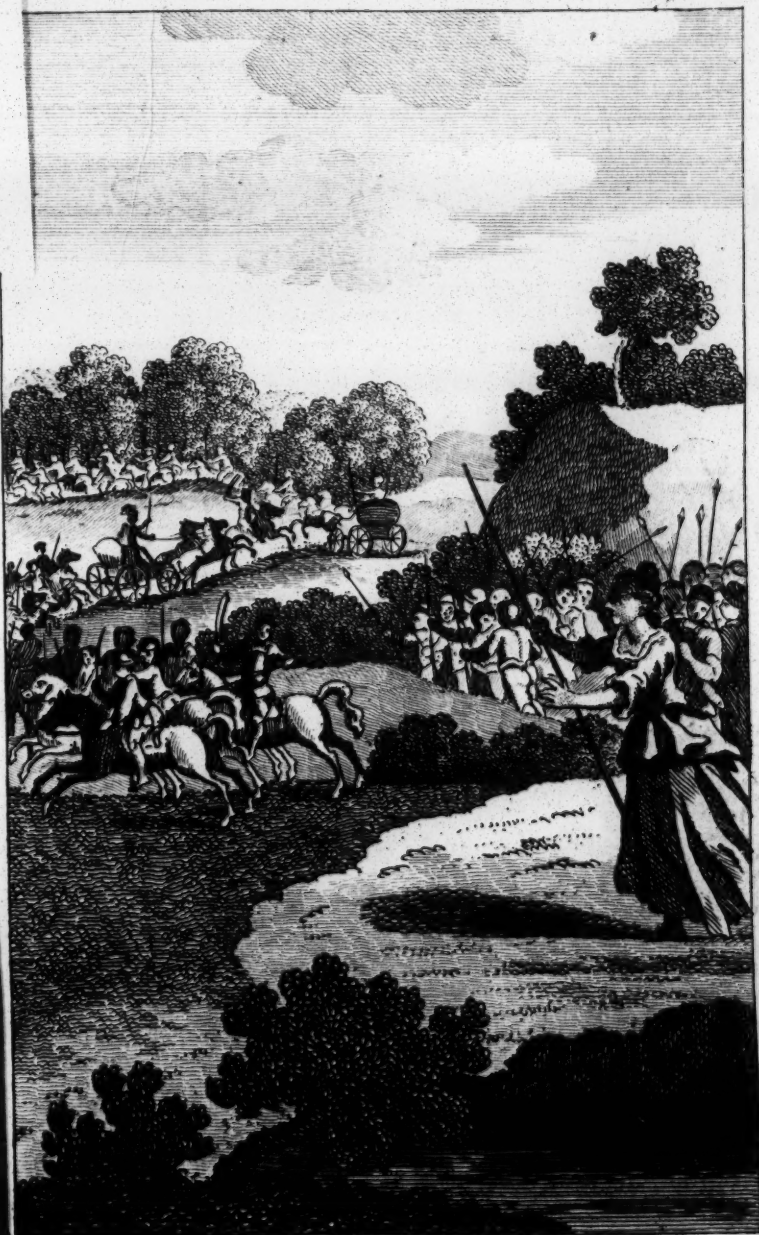
lief, sat pining under their oppression, nor ever thought of moving, unless it were to transport themselves to distant countries, far from the cruelty of these insulting tyrants.

In the midst of this deplorable situation arose Deborah, the prophetess ; a woman who had distinguished herself amongst the Jews by an impartial administration of justice to the neighbouring tribes. She sent to Barak a message from God, ordering him to levy, with the utmost speed, ten thousand men, and with this handful to give fierce battle, with this firm assurance, that on the first onset his numerous enemy should infallibly be routed and overthrown. Barak, without the least demur, agreed to the motion, on condition the prophetess would attend him : and so, having mustered his compliment of forces, they departed together, and posted themselves in an advantageous posture upon the top of a mountain. In the mean time, Sisera having received intelligence of this, with a powerful army, made hasty marches to get up with them ; and incamping his army at the foot of the mount, flattering himself with being able to cut off Barak's retreat. Deborah, in this situation, advised Barak not to wait till Sisera approached him, but to march directly down, and fall upon him, with all the assurance imaginable of success. The Hebrew general followed her directions, and coming
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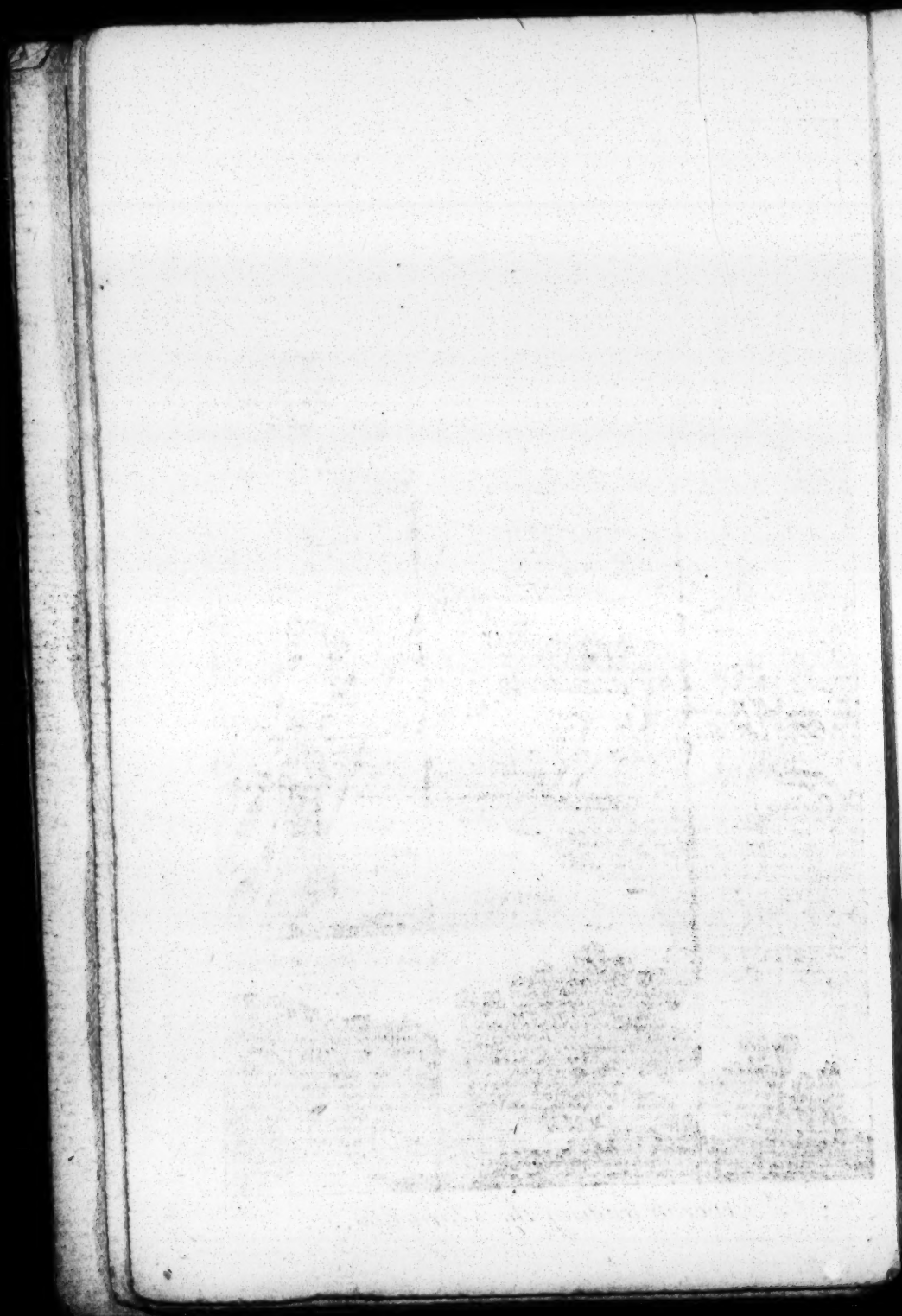
down upon the enemy, before they were aware, began the charge with such inexpressible fury, that, joined with a terrible storm of rain and hail, that drove full in their faces, together with the amazing terror they were struck with ; that, not able to stand before the Israelites, they fled with the utmost precipitation ; and being pursued by the conquerors to the brinks of a river, swelled by the impetuous torrents, occasioned by the hasty rains, met their fate by attempting to pass it ; for the greatest part of the army was drowned, and their dead bodies carried into the Mediterranean sea.

Sisera, in the mean time, seeing his whole army broken and dispersed, quitted his chariot ; and making his escape on foot, met Jael, the wife of Heber, who had seen him coming, and had left her tent on purpose to meet and invite him into it, which he, apprehending no danger from her, whose husband was her master's near ally, readily accepted.

The fatigue of the day had made him thirsty, and intreating some water of Jael, she immediately gave him milk, as much as he requested, when, charging her strictly to conceal him from all enquiries, he laid him down to take that repose he stood so much in need of. No sooner had he closed his eyes, than Jael, taking a hammer and a long nail, and placing



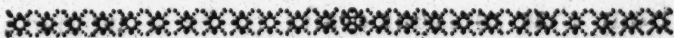
Deborah leading the Israelites.



placing it to his temples, with one blow pierced his head, and pinned him to the ground. And when Barak, in his pursuit, had reached her tent, she called him in, and shewed him the pride of the enemy fallen by her hand.

This victory put an end to the oppressions of the north, and, upon many accounts, was attended with so many signal events, that the pious and heroic Deborah made a triumphant song in commemoration of it, in which she politically commends those tribes that came readily into the war, and upbraids with infamy all those who meanly declined the service of their country.

The above is the only renowned act recorded of our prophets; but it is an act built upon the noblest basis, and for which the sacred historian has justly placed her in the list of illustrious patriots.



REFLECTION.

THE character of the famous prophetess Deborah, I pitched upon on purpose for the service of my young female readers; and indeed, though her life be but a short one, the whole history of it comprising little more than

70 THE LIFE OF DEBORAH.

than one celebrated action, there is ample matter for a young lady's observation, and rules for the conduct of the fair sex, sufficient to recommend it to the inspection of every one that is ambitious of appearing to advantage, in whatever sphere of life she is ordained to move. Deborah was a prophetess, that is, a person for her virtue eminently distinguished by God, in as much as, at certain times, he thought proper to reveal his will to her, in a very extraordinary, and to us unaccountable, manner; and methinks, if her character be regarded in this light, it cannot fail of filling her sex with such a proper idea of their own dignity, as must prevent their ever descending to any action, which may sully that purity and holiness, which seems by nature designed as the very essence of their species of beings; and from which, when through indiscretion, looseness, or profligacy, any one deviates, she, in a strict sense, from that moment ceases to be a woman; and instead of being the pride and happiness of the creation, becomes the contempt and outcast of the whole earth. Deborah was one of the judges of Israel, which, at the time she lived, was the highest dignity her country could confer upon any of its members, and was always bestowed on account of the wisdom and integrity of the person who enjoyed

enjoyed it. A sufficient motive to every individual of the fair sex, to improve themselves by education in their youth, seeing that nature has endowed them with minds capable of receiving every accomplishment ; and that they may, in favourable circumstances, as properly distinguish themselves by their knowledge and abilities, as any of the stronger sex. It is a mean and low notion indeed, that women are designed to shine chiefly in household œconomy ; that they should therefore be fit to appear to advantage in nothing else. And if it were only with regard to the great affair of matrimony, it is absolutely necessary, that every young lady should take care to improve and cultivate her understanding, by which means alone she can be rendered a fit companion for a sensible man. And as the prophetess Deborah, notwithstanding the natural tenderness of her sex, did not refuse to accompany Barak to the war, so I would have my young female readers receive that circumstance of her life, as a warning against the cowardice which affected ladies are apt to think amiable in them ; and to teach them, that in a just and good cause, especially where religion and virtue are concerned, no woman can be too resolute and courageous.

But while we talk in this manner, we by no means recommend the fierceness and cruelty

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elty observable in the character of Jael, whose murder of Sisera, as we do not find it to have been done by any immediate impulse from God, we will venture to pronounce unhospitable, treacherous, and cruel.

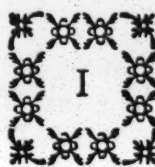


THE



THE LIFE OF

R U T H.

 N a country called Moab, about fifteen hundred years antecedent to the Christian æra ; was born Ruth, at a time when Israel was governed by judges. Now it happened, that there was a great famine in that country, in so much, that several of the inhabitants were obliged to go abroad for sustenance ; and, amongst the rest, Elimelech and his wife Naomi, with their two sons, left their native place, Bethlehem-Judah, and went into the kingdom of Moab, where Elimelech soon after died ; and the young men taking wives, did not long survive him, but died also, leaving their widows to take care of their poor mother.

In these distressed circumstances Naomi had no course to take, but that which led homewards : hearing therefore that things began to be plenty again in Israel, she determined to set out upon the journey. Her

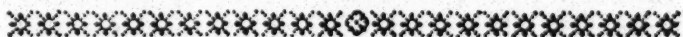
daughters indeed would have followed her thither ; but she dissuaded them from it, in consideration of her inability to assist and provide for them ; and this plea was so strong, that one of them actually returned to her own kindred, and left her ; but the other, who was our Ruth, remained fixed in her first resolution, to stay with, and share her fortune. These two, therefore, went on their way, till in some time they arrived at the place of Naomi's native habitation.

This happened in the season of harvest, when the reapers were in the field ; and Ruth's late husband having here a kinsman of great wealth and authority, she requested her mother-in-law, that she would permit her to go and glean in his corn ; for as it was the custom of the nearest relations to marry the widow of any person deceased, she did not know but this rich man, who was called Boaz, might take a fancy to her, and, as the method was, make her his wife. Her mother approved of her design ; nor were they balked in their suppositions ; for Boaz seeing Ruth amongst his reapers, enquired who she was ; and being informed, intreated her with much kindness and respect ; applauded, above all things, her dutiful conduct towards her mother-in-law ; and inviting her to dinner with him, ordered his men to throw handfuls of barley in her way ; so that

that at night she brought home a considerable measure of that grain.

Naomi was, no doubt, greatly pleased with this success ; and Ruth, in the same manner kept gleaning in the fields of Boaz during the whole time of barley harvest ; but that being over, her mother-in-law, touched with her filial piety, thought it was incumbent upon her to do her best, to settle her in the world. She therefore advised Ruth to dress herself, and, as their kinsman Boaz seemed well inclined towards her, to go into his barn, where he was then thrashing, and as soon as night was come, and he was lain down to sleep there, as the manner of those days was, she instructed her to uncover his feet, and lay herself down by him. A scrupulous obedience to this advice was the consequence of it. Boaz went to sleep, and about midnight wakening, perceived a woman in the place. He was at first exceedingly surprized ; but Ruth explaining the rectitude of her motives for such a conduct, he began to launch out warmly in her praise ; and as her character for virtue and piety was very great, he promised, that if a nearer relation than he, who lived in the city, would not marry her, he would himself become her husband. So rising before it was light, he dispatched Ruth with a handsome present to her mother-in-law, and went about his usual occupations.

But it was not long before Boaz performed his promise to his fair kinswoman ; for going that very day to the gate of the town, which in early times was the usual place for transacting all manner of business, he called upon the next relation of Ruth's late husband, to know whether he would marry the widow ; which he declining, Boaz declared, that he himself would take the family of Naomi into his protection : and calling all the elders and people as witnesses to a compact made between him and the man, he shortly after publicly married Ruth, and great rejoicing were made upon the occasion.



R E F L E C T I O N .

THE reason why the sacred writers thought proper to give the life of Ruth in the scriptures was, that from her descended, according to the flesh, our most blessed Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST ; but we have admitted it into our collection for different reasons ; because it affords a very excellent example in private life, by shewing to what supreme honours and dignity a woman may raise herself by virtue, chastity, and that gentle and dutiful behaviour which should be the characteristic of the sex.

We

We find that Ruth's kind conduct to her mother-in-law was one of the chief occasions why Boaz took notice of her. It appears indeed to have been the general conversation of the whole country at that time; and was, in all probability, the reason why God honoured her so far as to make her the root, from whence his only begotten son was to spring. Very wrong indeed are the notions of those young ladies, who imagine, that to make themselves respected and talked of, they must behave in a proud and coquettish manner; for nothing in the world is so likely to make them laughed at and condemned. To attract the attention of the world they should be meek, modest, and sober; neither light in their conduct, nor vain in their apparel. In a word, neatness, good nature, prudence, and obedience, are the great ornaments to set off every woman: without them beauty becomes deformity, wit detestable, and riches of no use. To have others think highly of them, they should think humbly of themselves: in order to command, they should study to submit: in short, would they acquire the admiration of man, they should square all their actions by the fear of God.





THE LIFE OF
S A M P S O N.

 During the administration of the judges, the Israelites enjoyed a profound peace ; but as often as they relapsed into their old impieties, the Philistines were suffered to invade and oppress them ; which gave the valiant acts of Sampson a glorious opportunity to exert and display themselves, to the extreme terror of the enemy, and to the glory of the Jewish nation. This great man was born in the year of the world two thousand five hundred and sixty-one, fourteen hundred and forty-three years before Christ, and was the son of Manoah, by a woman whose name we find no where recorded in holy writ.

His mother had never had children, when by some divine assurances she was informed, she should bear a son, a Nazarite from his birth, (who by the Jewish law drank no wine, or ever permitted a razor to his head) and the time appointed by the divine promise being

THE LIFE OF SAMPSON. 79

being accomplished, she was accordingly delivered of a son, and called his name Sampson.

While he was yet a youth, he exerted amazing acts of strength and activity. When he came to man's estate, falling violently in love with the daughter of a Philistine, tho' his parents could by no means approve of the match, because she was sprung from an idolatrous family; yet such was their tenderness for their son, that they indulged his passion, and accompanied him to the place of her birth, to treat of the marriage.

In their journey thither our hero straggling a little from the company, had occasion to try his strength and dexterity; for a young lion suddenly rushing upon him obliged him to defend himself; but he with the utmost ease seized on the furious beast, and slew him. Some time after passing that way, he turned aside to see what was become of the lion's carcase, and to his great surprise found a swarm of bees with honey in it.

Now it was customary to continue the nuptial entertainments for seven days; and to do Sampson greater honour, his wife's relations had brought thirty of their prime youths to bear him company; to whom (as the manner then was) he propounded a riddle, which if they could explain in the time that the feast lasted, he obliged himself to give them
thirty

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thirty suits of cloathes ; but if they could not, they were to forfeit the like to him.

The words of the riddle were, “ Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness ; ” which so puzzled the young men, that they were obliged to have recourse to Sampson’s wife, desiring her to worm the solution out of her husband, which, when with much importunity she had done, she told it them. Sampson enraged at her perfidy, hereupon went to a city of the Philistines, and having slain thirty of the inhabitants, stripped them of their cloathes, and in derision presented them to the expounders of the riddle. He then left his wife, and went home to his father’s, while she entered into a fresh engagement with one of her own nation, and married him.

In some time, however, when his resentment began to abate, and his passion for his wife got the better of his resolves, he hasten’d to her father’s house ; but to his no small astonishment, was denied admittance, and told by the father himself, that on a strong presumption he had entirely forsaken his wife, he had thought proper to marry her to one of his companions ; but that, to make him amends, another daughter, more beautiful than her, was at his service. But this answer was far from satisfying Sampson ; and concluding it was rather a general con-
trivance

trivance of the Philistines to affront him, than altogether a scheme of the father's, he vowed revenge, which he soon executed in the following manner.

By some means or other he had collected a multitude of foxes, to the number of three hundred, and tying them two by two together by the tails, and fixing a lighted torch between each, he turned them, at different places, into the corn fields. We may easily suggest the destruction this must occasion over the whole country ; and the Philistines understanding that Sampson had done this in revenge for the affront he had received from his father-in-law, they, in their resentment, came in a body, fired the house over the old man's head, and so destroyed him and his son's wife together. This was a fresh provocation, and Sampson, without any further ceremony, fell immediately upon the rioters, and sacrificed numbers of them to his fury.

Now our hero being but too conscious he must have highly provoked the enemy, thought proper to retire to a place of security for his residence, and for that purpose chose the top of a rock, not easily accessible, belonging to the tribe of Judah. Here the Philistines with an armed force demanded the delivery of him ; and the people of Judah fearing the consequences of a refusal, determined to seize and give him up to them.

But

But upon his approach to the Philistines, who ran out with joy to receive him, thinking they had him now secure, he snapped the cords with which his countrymen had bound him, and espying the jaw-bone of an ass, for want of a better weapon, made use of that to wreak his revenge upon the enemy ; at every blow he dealt death around him, and, in the conclusion, sent a thousand of them headlong to destruction.

After this action Sampson began to despise the Philistines, and, without the least fear, took up his lodgings in one of their chief cities ; of which the governors having intelligence, sent a guard to beset the house, and watch the gates of the city, with an intent to seize him on his going out in the morning. But Sampson informed of this, arose at midnight, and taking the two gates of the city, and laying them on his shoulders, retired to his people with them, and there left them.

But a more fatal adventure than any hitherto related befel him soon after ; for falling in love with a beautiful woman named Dalilah, he became so infatuated with her charms, that he lost all regard to his own safety ; and the princes of the Philistines remarking this his passion, came and promised her an handsome acknowledgment, if she could any ways engage him to discover the secret cause of his extraordinary strength.

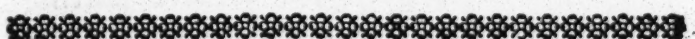
She

She undertook to accomplish it, and failed not to employ all the arts she was mistress of; but he only amusing her with fictions, and trifling with her perplexities, so put her beyond all bounds of patience, that in a pretended fit of tenderness, and flood of tears, she at last accused him of want of love for her; and by perpetually teasing and importuning him, she prevailed with him one day to tell her, which indeed was truth, that the cause of his strength lay in his hair, which once deprived of, he should be but as other men.

This was what Dalilah wanted, and taking advantage the next time he reposed his head in her lap, she cut off his hair, and informing the Philistines, they instantly rushed in upon him, bound him, and put out his eyes. In that sad condition they carried him to Gaza, their chief city, and there putting him in prison, made him work like a common slave.

In process of time however his hair grew again, and with it his former strength returned; so that, when several of the nobility and princes of the Philistines were met in a general assembly, to return thanks to their god Dagon for having delivered their principal enemy into their hands; in the midst of their festivity they ordered Sampson to be brought before them, to insult his misfortunes,

tunes, and sport with his blindness. A large number of people were assembled upon this occasion, and the building they were in, having only two pillars that supported the roof, Sampson upon his entrance desired the boy that led him, to guide him to one of them, under pretence of resting himself. He did so, and Sampson having by this means laid hold of the two main supporters, after a most fervent and pious ejaculation to God, for the restoration of his former strength, he gave them so violent a shake, that down came the house, and with a terrible crush buried no less than three thousand persons under its ruins. And thus died our hero in the midst of his enemies, as he had desired; and when his relations heard of his death, they sent and took away the body, and buried it honourably in the sepulchre of his ancestors.

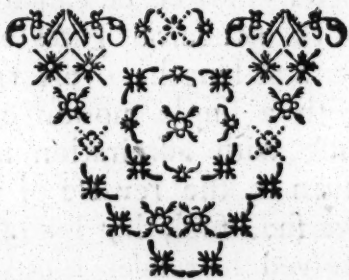


R E F L E C T I O N.

OF how little use is strength, or beauty of body, when unaccompanied by wisdom and integrity of mind! Of this truth Sampson is a remarkable instance, who, by his own weak and imprudent conduct, not only rendered the bounty of providence useless, but rendered the very bounty which was designed

signed him for a blessing, a curse and a misfortune. Let us consider his character in two points of view ; and first, in the light in which God and nature designed it ; when we think of him, as the son of rich and honorable parents, the ruler of a great and powerful nation ; for he was one of the judges of Israel, and as an adopted son of God, being a Nazarite, as the scripture expresses it, from his mother's womb. We are filled with ideas of reverence and respect, when we reflect on his wonderful strength and activity ; when we look back, and see him conquering lions with his bare hands, destroying multitudes with what could scarce be called a weapon ; carrying off the ponderous gates of a city on his back ; and at length, overturning a vast structure with a single motion of his arm ; we are struck with admiration and amaze. But let us turn to the reverse of the medal, and there we shall find, that his rank and fortune only served to render him overbearing and insolent ; his great strength, extravagant and outrageous. What must we think of this man, when we hear of his marrying an idolatress woman, and then leaving her ? his loving lewd women, and discovering the great secret whereon his all depended to a common prostitute ? His killing some, and maiming others, who perhaps had never done him any personal injuries ; and setting a whole coun-

try on fire to revenge a supposed insult ; and let us from hence learn the following things : That suffering is the consequence of violence ; disquiet the consequence of rage ; that remorse always attends a blind submission to our passions ; and that shame and death is the end of all. In a word, let us learn, that God bestows, but he has left man to render his gifts serviceable or detrimental by his own conduct.





THE LIFE OF
D A V I D.

 AVID was the son of Jesse, born (about the two thousand eight hundred and eightieth year of the world, and something more than one thousand one hundred and sixteen years before Christ) at Bethlehem in Judea; and was the youngest of eight sons. He was in the field, keeping his father's sheep, when Samuel, by God's special appointment, came to annoint him king of Israel, in the room of Saul; after which ceremony, David, by the influence of the divine spirit, found himself possessed of every virtue and qualification requisite for a prince. Now Saul, in the mean time, was seized with a disorder, that at last settled into a confirmed melancholy, frequently attended with symptoms of dangerous phrenzy; and in this condition, being advised to music as a relief, David, at the instigation of some courtiers, was strongly recommended as excellent in

that art, and as a man every other way qualified to engage the royal attention ; and upon this he was immediately sent for to court. At his appearance there the king was greatly struck with the beauty of his person ; but when he heard him exercise his skill upon the harp, he was infinitely delighted, and in the midst of his transports found himself entirely freed from all those black and melancholy thoughts that had preyed upon his mind. In gratitude for this delivery, Saul made him his armour-bearer : but David, upon the king's recovery, returned to his father's house. However an adventure of a very singular nature, and one which brought him into the highest esteem, both with the king and the people, soon after obliged him again to quit it.

The Philistines were at this time at war with the Israelites ; and while both armies lay facing each other, a champion of a gigantic size advanced before the camp of the Philistines, and with great insolence challenged any one of the Israelites to single combat, the issue of which was to decide the fate of the war. But all declined it, till David, (who happened at this time to be employed in bringing provisions to his brothers, who were then in the service) observing the vain and impious boastings of this gigantic creature, and being struck with a
divine

divine impulse, and urged by the greatness of the reward, which was no less than the king's daughter in marriage, to any one that should kill him, discovered to some who stood next him, his inclination to accept the challenge.

This soon reaching the king's ear, he sent for him, and having earnestly surveyed his youth, told him, with great concern in his countenance, that he was afraid the event would not answer his wishes, seeing the immense inequality there was between the combatants, besides the giant's being a soldier from his cradle. But David, no ways intimidated, replied, he was no stranger to feats equally great with killing this monster, as a lion and a bear, which he had once slain with his bare hands, might testify; and he trusted, that the same almighty power that assisted him then, would not fail to shield and protect him now.

The king, pleased with this gallant answer, immediately offered him his own armour; but our hero, on trying it on, found it quite inconvenient for his purpose; and therefore, trusting to his great skill in using a sling, he furnished himself with five smooth stones, and advancing towards the Philistines, (who looked upon him with the utmost contempt on account of his youth) let fly one of them with such rapidity and strength, and in such

a direction, as found a passage into his forehead, and piercing his brain, left him a lifeless carcase on the ground. The consequence of this was the entire overthrow of the Philistine army, who seeing their champion slain, fled from their enemy with the utmost precipitation; while David, after severing the head from the body with Goliath's own sword, returned in triumph to the camp. Being introduced to the king, he was received with the greatest applauses; but tho' every one shewed the high sense they had of the author of this gallant action, yet none expressed that entire satisfaction that seemed to flow from the praises of Jonathan the king's son, a prince of extraordinary bravery, and who was so taken with the conduct and courage of our hero, on this occasion, as gave birth to a friendship that ended but with life. But after this, in the army's return home, the women, in their songs of triumph, unluckily attributed to David, instead of the king, the greatest share of applause, and stirred up such a commotion of jealousy in Saul's breast, that, from that time he never regarded David with a gracious eye; nay, so far did he carry his resentment, that though he retained him in his service, he deprived him of the promised reward of his victory, his eldest daughter, and gave her in marriage to another. 'Tis true, he made up
this,

this, some time after, by giving him the princess Michal, his second daughter, but upon very hard and dangerous conditions ; and he was continually attempting the life of David, either by artifice or open force.

While things were in this situation David received intelligence from his brother Jonathan of a design against his life, with advice to retreat from court as fast as possible, till a reconciliation could be brought about, which, such was Saul's malice and envy, was impracticable ; and David, after several narrow escapes, was obliged to live in the nature of an out-law, and took shelter at last in a city belonging to the Philistines, not thinking himself safe in any of Saul's dominions. But being soon discovered by the king of that place, he was obliged to counterfeit madness, to evade the suspicion of a spy ; and making his escape to a town in Judah, was there met by his friends and relations, who resenting his ill treatment, in conjunction with other malecontents, raised a small army of about four hundred men ; and with this handful of forces did David protect himself from the insults of Saul, and harass the enemies of his country.

But in particular it happened, that once being distressed for provisions, and knowing nowhere to apply, but to a wealthy inhabitant of the neighbourhood he was in, named Nabal,

bal, whose flocks and possessions he had been extremely careful to preserve from any injury of his followers, he now sent to him, to desire him, in return for the civilities he had received, to send him some provisions for the refreshment and support of his army. But the surly farmer received the messengers with great rudeness, and with some opprobrious reflections on their master himself, dismissed them, without granting their request, which ungrateful usage so exasperated David, that he threatened the most bloody consequences the next morning, and had certainly put his designs in execution, had it not been immediately diverted by Nabal's wife, who, informed of the affair, hastened to the camp, attended by her servants, with proper presents for the occasion ; where, by the softness of her address, and force of her charms, she soon wrought upon David to recede from his intentions ; and upon the death of her husband, which happened soon after, David took her for his wife.

In the mean time, Saul receiving intelligence where David and his little army were concealed, he took three thousand men, and went in quest of him ; but the son of Jesse being informed where the king was encamped, after going privately to reconnoitre his forces, he took with him at night a single companion, and entering the camp, found

found Saul asleep in his tent. His companion would have gladly made use of this opportunity to dispatch the king; but David would by no means permit him; only the spear and cruise of water, that was at his bed's head, he bid him bring with him, that he might shew the king how much his life had been at his mercy; and accordingly, when they got at a convenient distance, David with a loud voice upbraided the Israelitish general with his neglect of preserving the king's life; and when Saul, upon hearing his voice, came out of the camp, and spake to him, he expostulated with him, that by thus expelling him from his own country, he forced him to converse with infidels, and (as much as in him lay) to embrace their religion. Whereupon Saul accusing himself of cruelty, and applauding David's generosity, confessed his guilt, and promised, for the future, never to make any future attempts upon his life.

But our hero, notwithstanding these specious promises, dreading the instability of Saul's temper, and knowing there could be no security while he continued in his dominions, went over to the Philistines, and ingratiated himself in such a manner with their king, that he assigned him a considerable town for his habitation; and as soon as he was settled there, several of Saul's best officers
and

and soldiers came over to his party. Thus reinforced he made many excursions into the distant provinces of the Philistines, and always returning with great booty, persuaded their credulous king, they were the spoils of his countrymen. In short, to such a degree of confidence was he grown with this prince, that he proposed taking him to the war he had just then declared against the Israelites ; but David artfully evaded it, and on his return home found sufficient employment in recovering from the enemy, (who during his absence had attacked his little assylum) all the plunder and prisoners they had made themselves masters of.

Soon after this David received the news of the defeat of the Israelitish army, with the melancholy account of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, who fell on that fatal day ; and, by God's particular directions, removed with all his family and forces to his native country, where, in a short time, all the princes of Judah came to congratulate him on his safe return, and to offer him the crown of their particular tribe ; for the rest of the people of Israel had been prevailed upon to acknowledge Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, successor to the throne. David accepted the crown from the princes of his own tribe ; and for two years there were no hostilities on either side. But not long after this a war commenced, which continued

